

#242

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Dragon

MAGAZINE

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Spell Design**

**The Wizards
Three**

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Plus

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The Wyrms' Turn™

Constant Changes

In a year of dramatic changes for TSR, Wizards of the Coast, and the game industry as a whole, it's easy to become blasé about the relatively minor changes that come along with the big ones. Put a hundred small changes together, however, and you have something pretty spectacular. You've already started seeing the results of those little changes in these pages, and next month we add the finishing touches to give you a fine-tuned DRAGON® Magazine.

Don't worry: We aren't relaunching the magazine all over again. From what you've told us through letters, email, and conversations at conventions, about 90% of the 1996 relaunch has been just right. Now we're concentrating on that final 10%, and here's what you can expect to see.

Many of you have asked for interviews with your favorite authors, game designers, and artists. Starting next month, we'll end each issue with "ProFiles," a short interview with one of the most popular creators of fantasy fiction, games, and artwork. Our first chat is with Margaret Weis, who really needs no introduction here.

Another common request has been to expand our roleplaying games reviews, so we're adding a new section to Rick Swan's "Roleplaying Reviews." In it, Lester Smith returns to DRAGON Magazine with his own "Re:Views" section, focusing on small-press or lesser-known games that might not have made it to your local game store.

While we'll remain devoted first to players of the AD&D game, Dungeon Masters will get some extra attention each month in a new DM's advice column written by Peter Adkison, the man who liked AD&D so much he bought the company. "Out of Character" features tips and suggestions drawn from Peter's many years of gaming experience.

DRAGON Magazine isn't the only thing to benefit from the results of this year's changes. As the newly appointed TSR Product Group Manager, Bill Slavicsek tells us, "For the first time, at least in my experience at TSR, the responsibility and creative control are in the hands of the brand managers. That's going to make for better product."

While there's no official decision to start work on the third edition of the AD&D game, Bill also points out, "In 1998, we're concentrating on setting material for the AD&D game—products that remain useful even in the event of a third edition."

AD&D is certainly the biggest TSR product, but it isn't alone in receiving a great deal of attention. As many devoted fans of the GREYHAWK® setting might already have read, that classic campaign returns next summer, right after the new ALTERNITY™ science fiction game hits the stores. Fans of the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, PLANESCAPE®, and RAVENLOFT® settings won't be overlooked, and the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign will enjoy a relaunch in late summer. DRAGONLANCE® fans—both players of the SAGA™ system and the AD&D game—will be pleased to know that the setting will support both games next year.

Other TSR projects for the year include a new incarnation of the MARVEL SUPERHEROES® roleplaying game, this time driven by the story-oriented SAGA system, as well as a few surprises that we're announce in coming months. Keep an eye on the TSR "Previews" section in these pages for more information as it comes out.

One thing doesn't change for TSR or for DRAGON Magazine, and that's that we won't *stop* changing. As ever, let us know what you think, and chances are good that we'll do much more than simply read your letter.

Dave Gross



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DRAGON #242

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Laws of Spell Design

Ted Zuvich

Designing new spells has always been tricky business, until now.

Page 22

The Magic of Krynn Reborn!

Stephen Kenson

Magic is back in the Fifth Age of the DRAGONLANCE® campaign.

Page 32



Mage Construction

Michael Lambert

Spellcasters can make the best masons and carpenters without even dirtying their hands.

Page 40

Learn More About Magic

Lachlan MacQuarrie

Once you've succeeded at Spellcraft 101, where do you turn next?

Page 44



Jest the Wizards Three

Ed Greenwood

A few little magics from the wizards of Faerûn and Oerth.

Page 48

Departments

Wyrms of the North

Ed Greenwood

Shocking secrets revealed about "The Dragon of the Statues."

Page 54



Bazaar of the Bizarre

Bruce Schmidt

Drizzt Do'Urden isn't the only one with one of the "Magical Allies."

Page 72

Arcane Lore

Lloyd Brown

Morion the Bard has invented his own repertoire of "Spells of Sight and Sound."

Page 76



Dragon's Bestiary

Bruce Schmidt

The wizards of the Arcane Age left a legacy of "Talisman Servants."

Page 82

Ecology of ...

Johnathan M. Richards

The secret lives of the patch work monsters known as "Mongrelmen."

Page 86



Columns

3 The Wym's Turn™
It looks as though 1998 will be a very good year.

6 D-Mail™
Article ideas, corrections, and suggestions.

8 Forum
Continuing discussions and new arguments.

16 Sage Advice
Answers to your conundrums concerning polymorphed creatures, elven resistances, and more.

96 Bookwyrms™
Suggested reading for roleplayers.

96 Cons & Pros
Coming soon to a town near you.

108 Roleplaying Reviews
Fantasy sourcebooks, ripe for the plundering.

120 The Current Clack
All the news that's fit to print, and maybe some that isn't.

Other Material

98 Knights of the Dinner Table™
100 DragonMirth
102 Gamer's Guide
104 Floyd
116 TSR Previews

FICTION

62 In the Bleak Deepwinter

Lynn Abbey

A lost story of the Simbul of Aglarond comes to light.





If you have a comment, opinion, or question for the editors of DRAGON® Magazine, we'd love to hear from you.

In the United States and Canada, send letters to "D-Mail," DRAGON Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, USA. In Europe, send letters to "D-Mail," DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. You can also send email to us at dmail@wizards.com.

Two-Bit Floozie?

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I have never written to you before, never having seen the need. However, something monstrous has happened. Some two-bit floozie has invaded the Wizards Three, daring, striving to replace Dalamar. This is too insulting to contemplate. First you kill off the DRAGONLANCE® setting, then the next thing I know, Dalamar's gone kaputz! Gone like yesterday's news. For who, I ask you? For some *nobody*, that's who! Dalamar has long been a favorite character, next to Raistlin of course. It's rare to have a renegade elf, let alone a cool one.

So, do gamers everywhere a favor—ditch the wannabe, and bring back the real thing. If he has access to planes, he can go to other worlds. Heck, you brought Lord Soth to Ravenloft. Why not

Dalamar somewhere else? Anyway I'm pleading: don't debase the Wizards Three or your illustrious magazine by the continued presence of the wannabee. (I won't bring myself to say her name.)

Thomas Ragonese III
Dallas, TX

We asked Ed what he thought of Thomas's letter, and he told us he'd "pass it along." A few days later, this reply arrived at our offices:

To Thomas Ragonese III of the land Dallas,

Greetings, Goodman (for so I believe you to be, though your words run harsh upon the presence of myself).

Your missive hath been made known to me. Though you prefer me both nameless and gone from gatherings that have greatly gladdened mine heart, I would stay. Though you call my mere presence a debasement, I will unfold my thoughts to you. Consider:

Were you given a chance to see worlds anew and banter words with a mage of another world, bright in both legend and spellcraft, would you not take it?

Were you given a chance to win favor in the eyes of your lord and master, would you not take it?

Were you given a chance to sup on that exquisite gods-food "ice cream," would you not take it?

Ponder upon these, and see my will and situation. My master Mordenkainen is greatly pleased by my swift-growing mastery of magic, and my conduct in the presence of the Lord Elminster—but both archmages have kindly and gently made clear to me that I am in no way a permanent replacement for the Lord Dalamar. Calm thyself, and prepare for his return, as I do.

How so? Know that I have offered to place myself in peril, to journey to Krynn and learn what hath befallen the Master of the Conclave. I welcome this chance to prove myself, to see yet another new world, and to taste adventure alone for the first time.

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My gracious master promises me that his Art shall create a *clone* of me, if I return not within a season. Some great calamity, or perhaps only great change, hath befallen Krynn, and both my lord and the Lord Elminster are more troubled than they will say plainly. It seemeth that they do miss the Lord Dalamar.

I am a "wannabe" great mage, I freely admit, though thy phrase "two-bit floozie" cries out for an apology on thy part—or a spell-challenge upon mine. I renounce my right to cause further unpleasantness between us; will you do the same?

Rautheene of Greyhawk
Mage-Apprentice to Lord
Mordenkainen the Mighty

P.S. I accept apologies in ice cream.

Article Ideas

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I'm glad to see you back in print after your short "vacation." I have been a reader of DRAGON Magazine since around issue #87. I have always enjoyed the great campaign and character ideas I have gained from your articles.

I like the new layout you've produced over the last year, especially the full reproduction of the cover art inside without the titles. I always thought it a shame that these works of art were not viewable without the titles covering them.

I was glad to read in the last issue (#238) that Ed Greenwood will be writing more of the "Wizards Three" articles. I always enjoyed the creative use of cantrips and spells that come out of these articles. The same goes for "Rogues Gallery."

The biggest thing I have a problem with though is the increase in flip-the-page advertising. I know you need the adds to help with the cost of publication, but these "to be continued" ads are getting annoying. I would also like to see an increase in the length of the "D-mail" section and of "Sage Advice" as well.

In closing, I'd like to give you an article idea. I would write it myself; however,

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life doesn't give me the time. None of the books to date give much idea on types of clothing worn during the time period most of the AD&D® campaigns—let alone weights, which are important if someone is carrying an extra set or two of clothes. What paladin would put his or her musty armor back on after a nice relaxing bath following a month of strenuous kobold-smashing and orc-killing? Why not put on a nice clean tunic and trousers. I think you get the idea.

Thanks for the time to read my two cents' worth.

James Wade
Watkins Glen, NY

That sounds like a splendid idea for an article. Now, who'll be the first one to send us a formal proposal for it?

James's letter is the sort we'd like to see much more often, telling us what he thinks we're doing right and what we should change. If you have an opinion on this issue, or dozens of opinions, please share them with us by writing to "D-Mail." If enough come in each month, we'll consider expanding the size of this column.

And More Article Ideas

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I'm writing just to say that *DRAGON Magazine* is still a great as it ever was since I began reading more than two years ago.

Also, since you may be bringing back some of the old campaigns like the GREYHAWK® and SPELLJAMMER® settings, will *DRAGON Magazine* contain articles to correspond with these systems? I still run SPELLJAMMER adventures every now and then, so if you add anything onto it, I would be greatly in debt. These old campaigns have been my favorite ones since I began playing the AD&D game.

Jason A. Kahler
4949 Walkingfern Drive
Rockville, MD 20853

Whether an AD&D campaign is active or inactive, we'll continue to support it with good articles (see issue #241 for the proof

of that promise). While we've seen occasional GREYHAWK submissions, we'd love to see more proposals for good SPELLJAMMER articles (like Roger Moore's article on the Scro in DRAGON Magazine Annual #1). The best proposals should show how the article would still be useful to people who don't play the SPELLJAMMER campaign.

Plural Pila

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I really have enjoyed Issue #239, although I'm only partway through it.

I have some small quibbles with Dirty Orc Trick #84. First, the plural form of pilum is not pilums, but pila. Pilum is a Latin neutral noun with an "a" ending for the plural form of the noun (dropping the "um"). Second, the original pilum was not really light but quite heavy, and it was wielded by Roman legionnaires. It was used for throwing, and the shaft did not bend, but the head, made of soft metal, did. Often it would get through the shields of opponents, the metal bending, and it would be quite difficult to get the blasted thing out. Usually the opponents had to throw down their shields and face the legionnaires, who pulled out their short swords (gladius, or plural gladii) and charged in, stabbing fiercely for the innards of their opponents. The Gauls and Germans fared badly against this tactic, even though, man for man, they were taller and heavier than the legionnaires. Caesar mentions this fact in his *Gallic Wars*.

All of the above courtesy of the guy who won the Latin medal in military prep school after laboring through Caesar so many years ago.

But, since we are talking about orcs, and not Romans, what John wrote was fine, and if the above quibble is the worst criticism I can find in the magazine, then it truly is a very superior issue.

Paul Culotta
Tacoma, WA



On the Cover

Believe it or not, this is Tony DiTerlizzi's first solo cover for *DRAGON Magazine*. Over the past few years, this prolific illustrator has produced a large and impressive body of work for just about everybody in the business—so much so that he feels the need to produce his own newsletter just to keep his legion of fans up to date. For a copy of that newsletter, send a 32¢-stamp to "DiTerlizzi Illustration, 405 First Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11215. You can check out his website at <http://arcane.eng.ohio-state.edu/tonyd/index.html>.

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All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. You must give us your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed (we will not consider a letter sent anonymously), but we will withhold your name if you ask us to do so, and we will not print your full address unless you request it.

Newbies to the Rescue

I have recently had the good fortune of beginning a campaign with some friends who are new AD&D® players. For those other DMs out there who are tired of your players who have played for years and know all the tricks, traps, and monsters descriptions, I recommend trying this. You will feel such a relief when you describe the "hairy seven-foot dog-faced men" and don't hear all the players respond, "Gnolls, ha! That's easy." New players don't know how to min-max and, in my experience, come up with more creative solutions to problems.

**You will feel such a relief
when you describe the
"hairy seven-foot dog-faced men"
and don't hear all the players respond,
"Gnolls, ha! That's easy."**

A tribe of "short rat-faced humanoids who steal away human babies at night" is much more intimidating when it's not immediately received as a group of half—HD Kobolds. I'm not saying that you should put away your three-year-old campaigns and search out all new

and uninitiated players. What, however, can we do to eliminate this problem?

I have taken a few minor steps to keep things fresh in my campaign. One thing that I do is eliminate "table talk." That is, I attempt to limit any discussion that is related solely to the "rules of the game." This practice stops players from planning outside of character. Another thing that can be done is to change the stats for monsters. The orcs of the south for instance, are the smaller cousins of northern orcs. The smaller cousins have one Hit Die, while the larger cousins have at least 2+1 Hit Dice and some special attributes that are not apparent to the PCs. If the party has any other experienced DMs, that can be a problem as well. Chances are they have all the old modules and most of the *DUNGEON® Adventures*. This greatly limits the resources that you can use.

One possibility is to use an old classic module like *U1 The Sinister Secret of Saltmarsh* and change the ending to something completely different. Another thing that you can do to keep things fresh is to make the players change roles. For instance, if Bruno always likes to play warriors, ask him to play a mage or—even better—a pacifist priest.

Of course, old players have their place. They make excellent leaders in a game where most of the other players are new. And, of course, most new players won't get your jokes about the first-edition monk trapped in the *RAVENLOFT®* setting, or the time when Kyle said this to Rich, etc.

These are just my thoughts. I would be happy to hear what others think.

**Chad Dukes
Leonardtown, MD**

Putting Humans in their Place

I have been meaning to write to "Forum" for years, and a "D-Mail" letter in issue #238 from Bjoern Dobbelsstein finally inspired me to do so. I would like to take issue with several of the letters in that issue's "Forum" column.

First there is Bruce F. Beyer's piece about the cavalier kit. He seems confused about the difference between a class and a kit. In the first edition, the cavalier was a class in its own right; kits are a second-edition confection. In the second edition AD&D rules, the cavalier is a kit, which means a character who is a cavalier will also be a fighter, a paladin, or (unlikely) a ranger. This is why the cavalier has fewer abilities in the second edition. Another consequence of this change is that a cavalier can have specialization with the attendant multiple attacks and other bonuses.

Mr. Beyer also writes that he does not believe paladins and rangers should be allowed to specialize. In several campaigns in which I have both played and DMed, rangers and paladins have been allowed to specialize in up to three weapons (while fighters could specialize in any number). There were still many fighters, the odd paladin, and absolutely no rangers in our adventuring parties.

Then there is Alexander Fontenot's comments concerning multi-classed humans. For me, this ties in with the old bugbear of level limits mentioned in John Cudmore's letter. It's funny how game balance is here being used as the reason for giving human characters a rough deal, when people question whether anyone would ever play a human if level limits were removed. In our campaign, we removed level limits from demihumans and compensated for this by allowing humans to be multi-classed. We also gave human characters +1 to any one ability score of the players choice, thereby taking care of demihuman characters' other big advantage: starting with a score of 19. The difference between an ability score of 18 and one of 19 is enormous, especially in Strength. The rationale behind our choice was that with a much greater population, the probability of a character of exceptional ability increases.

This change retained humans' unique flavor of generality and did not upset game balance. In fact, it improved balance. With level limits, players who wish to play demihumans must gamble whether the campaign will last long enough to hit the level limit. If it will, then the character is completely unplayable (steady improvement is the essence of any level-based game). If the level limits are not likely to be reached, then they clearly have no effect at all, balancing or otherwise.

As to Mr. Fontenot's objections, I too would be slightly horrified at the thought

When dealing
with demons...



...talk softly and
carry a BIG spear.



Ushio & Tora © 1995 ADV Films. All Rights Reserved. Art by: Ken Sato • G.K. Morita



Some families have skeletons in their closets, but you won't believe what the Aotsukis have in the basement! When a typical teenager accidentally unleashes a plague of demons, he turns to the only help he can think of... the demon his family's kept locked up in the basement for a thousand years! Okay, so maybe it's not the best option, but it's the only one that Ushio has open to him and at least the devil that you know is better than the ones that you don't! It's a buddy film unlike any you've ever seen before as boy and beast form an uneasy alliance to rid the town of its infernal infestations! And if Ushio can get Tora to stop trying to eat him, they might just succeed!



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of a high-level paladin/bard. Although I doubt any such character would live very long, given a paladin's propensity to charge up to the front and challenge the toughest foes combined with the multi-class character's inherent lack of hit points, I have a way to make sure of it: I would never allow a multi-classed paladin/bard in any campaign I was

met, putting experienced players in the group (including myself) to shame. So to all those male-only-by-dogma groups out there: Let the women play, and the whole group will benefit. Or are you scared that they will show you up?

James Thompson
Warwickshire, Great Britain
eeykjet@een1.eee.nottingham.ac.uk

While we might view slavery as an abomination, slave societies see themselves otherwise . . .

running. In fact, I would not allow paladins to multi-class at all (except maybe with the priest class). I do not see how this can be a reason for disallowing multi-classed humans in general. Does Mr. Fontenot say to his players, "Sorry, you cannot play a fighter/mage because paladin/bard is such a scary combination?"

Then there are the historical points. I just want to say the following: PCs are adventurers and heroes, a cut above the rest. What they are categorically not is your ordinary man or woman of the street. It is amazing how many people do not seem to see this. Mr. Fontenot's arguments show an excellent reason why an NPC should not be, for example, both a blacksmith and a tailor, but that is all. Fighters do not serve apprenticeships; they learn to fight as part of the militia, the army or from a hired tutor (if they are rich) or as a matter of survival on the streets. Thieves are likely to learn their skills a similar way, perhaps at a very early age. For example, suppose two characters (0-level humans) were both serving in an army. On discharge, they decide to take up magic and become apprenticed to a master mage. One decides to concentrate on the magic only and so is stuck with the combat abilities he had on leaving the army. The other keeps practicing his combat abilities as well as his magic. This allows his combat abilities to develop in parallel but slows down the development of his magic. Clearly, he is a multi-classed fighter/mage.

As a final point, I want to step back in time a bit to issue #226, which features much debate about female gamers. Over the years, there have been a number of women in the groups I have played in, although they were outnumbered by the men, and two of them were the best roleplayers I have ever

A Frightening Prospect

Though I have never in the past felt compelled to write in, upon reading Mr. Alexander Fontenot's letter on multi-classed humans (in issue #238), I decided to voice my opinion.

The primary factor for preventing humans from multi-classing is indeed, as Mr. Fontenot stated, game balance. As many people have argued, allowing humans to multi-class opens the door to chaos and ultra-powerful characters. Regarding the admittedly frightening prospect of a paladin/bard, I can say only that any DM as concerned with game balance as he seems should find a way to disallow this combination. For example, the character's deity would have to be a very unusual one to allow into the clergy a person who claims to follow a strict code of ethics and honor, while at the same time he roguishly and blatantly uses thieving skills behind the scenes. For that matter, the character would have to be unusual as well, and remember how few people can become paladins. The deity, unless its portfolio was primarily music, song, history, or (for lack of a better term) "roguishness," might not allow the character to be a paladin at all!

Mr. Fontenot's identification of the paladin and bard classes as actually being multi-classed humans deserves mention. The paladin class is less potent than the fighter/cleric combination. With the experience needed to reach 9th level (when the paladin gains his first first-level spell), a fighter/cleric has reached level 6/6 and is already casting third-level spells. To balance this, the paladin has granted abilities (which the cleric also has) and advances faster, because he is single-classed. The same goes for the bard, who lacks both the magical might and thieving prowess of a mage/thief

with the same total experience but is instead rewarded with other abilities.

Responding to Mr. Fontenot's citing of the historical reasons why multi-classing is not feasible, I must point out that these reasons are also applicable to the demihuman races, effectively making multi-classing off-limits to everyone. Or are we to believe that they have all developed such enlightened societies that such situations are no longer a problem? This game is played for fun, and so some such concerns must be laid to rest for *all* concerned.

Lastly, Mr. Fontenot's statement that suitable masters for beginning characters must be 9th level or above (the level that most characters attract followers) is, I believe, amiss. If that were so, then every 1st-level character would at the least know of such a person, a highly unlikely occurrence. Also, if one takes the time to think about it, this would make all but the very oldest wizards nonexistent, since they do not attract followers at all! Since no new wizard apprentices exist, they would not be an available character class for new PCs. Because this cannot be the case, there is no reason to expect that a prospective apprentice need find someone of 9th level or higher. With all apologies to Mr. Fontenot, this makes his last argument about the human physiology nonviable, as not every candidate is dead of old age.

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Slavers and Other Ancient Villains

Lloyd Brown's article on ancient villains (issue #238) offered good advice and certainly helped me develop a suitable adversary for my next campaign. While the idea was brilliant, however, I found some of the detail both contradictory and unlikely.

For example, I think his view of the slaver as a villainous archetype is misleading. Most importantly, for a slaver to exist, at least one society has to regard slavery as acceptable. While we might view slavery as an abomination, slave societies see themselves otherwise, and slavery performs a useful economic function. Slavers are businessmen, and slaves are precious commodities. There is no profit in deliberate degradation of slaves, nor can there be any reason to act as a slaver without a society that recognizes property rights over intelligent beings. Therefore, I do not agree that a slaver

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forms a villain archetype. Certainly, a villain might also be a slaver, and to non-slave cultures the slaver is evil, but I do not think that slavery would form more than a minor one of the many business interests developed by the ancient villain over the years.

I was also confused by the contradictions in the article concerning the loyalty of followers. On one hand, if offered employment in his service, "those naive enough to fall for this old trick are assassinated," and on the other hand, "loyal followers are the most valuable 'possessions' these villains can have . . . they represent a great investment." If employees

hard enough time keeping up with the storyline, figuring out the puzzles, and defeating the monsters, without someone making it that much harder. When this happens, then it is our sad task to put things right, for the benefit of everyone concerned.

The simplest method is, as you mentioned, not to invite the disruptive player(s) back to the group. This is a last resort, in my mind, not to be used until all other options are exhausted. In the meantime, there are things that you can do to fix the problem.

First, simply talk to the disruptive player and inform him of the problem.

In Defense of the Cavalier

In response to Mr. Kohler's attack on my letter "Ode to the Cavalier" (in issue #241), let me just begin by saying I have played and DMed for the last 15 years, and in all that time I have seen three players actually play a cavalier correctly. Mr. Kohler describes a game world ruled by power-gamers wielding skill-laden killing machines, namely the cavaliers and barbarians. If this is the case, Mr. Kohler, I propose that it is an atypical situation that you have created and failed to put into check.

As I stated earlier, very few players can properly play a cavalier. I have personally witnessed several players renounce their decision to be a cavalier and return their character to a run-of-the-mill fighter. The cavalier is just too restrictive to appeal to most players. Let's face it, after a week of reality, most players just want to kick butt come the weekend game session.

I still uphold my defense of the cavalier, as I outlined in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #238. He is not the mindless pawn of power gamers that Mr. Kohler suggests. He is what he has always been—the champion of the downtrodden, well within his right to retain all special abilities granted him by the powers that be.

If you ask me, the power gamers are those who play the death-wielding specialist mages. Why play a cavalier, who goes one on one vs. a single opponent, when you can launch a *fireball* and take out several hundred single-HD creatures? Much easier, less work, and a lot safer. Honestly, I made that statement about the cavalier kit collecting dust because I can't get anyone to play one. Everyone wants to play the single-classed fighter, no strings attached, or the almighty wizard.

Now let's set the record straight. It appears Mr. Kohler has misinterpreted some of the rules outlined in the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*. In his rebuttal, he states, "There is nothing anywhere prohibiting a fighter or paladin who takes the cavalier kit from specializing." Although obviously true in the first instance, he is completely wrong about the paladin.

The paladin, as is the case with the ranger, cannot take weapon specialization. On page 58 of the *CFH* [corrected 2nd printing, May 1992], under the paragraph heading, "Single Weapon Proficiency/Weapon Specialization," it states, "only single-class fighters, not

[The Cavalier] is not the mindless pawn of power gamers . . . he is . . . the champion of the downtrodden, well within his rights to retain all special abilities . . .

are summarily executed, I do not see how loyalty can be expected. My own feeling is that ancient villains can afford to be the most generous of employers, having amassed the power, security, and outlook to feel little danger from their underlings. Ancient villains will always be looking toward the long term, and it would be simplest to bribe PCs not to interfere. Breaking such an agreement would do the villain's reputation great harm, and he or she is likely to be around long enough to worry about such things.

Don't get me wrong; the article was another good idea from the *DRAGON Magazine* stable. It usefully highlights another area for improving roleplaying and baddies without necessarily giving them another *vornal blade* +20.

Timothy Eccles
London, England

Disruptive Players

This letter is a response to Mark Fitzpatrick's letter in *DRAGON Magazine* #239. You have a thorny problem that all players and DMs have from time to time: how to deal with the disruptive behavior of unruly players. As DMs, we have enough challenges to put together an enjoyable game without someone ruining the fun. As players, we have a

In some cases, the player doesn't realize that his behavior is disruptive until someone brings it to his attention. If you have had this talk before, then also warn him that continuing this stuff will get him ousted from the table.

At the table, the DM has control of the game, and all the elements that go along with an enjoyable evening. Short of reprimanding the player in front of the others, the DM can discipline unruly players by using their disruptive behavior against them (as long as the action happened while in character), resulting in a loss of experience points, loss of surprise, unexpected encounters, negative NPC reactions, lack of adventure knowledge, loss of status, or anything else the DM can imagine. If this happens a few times, and the player realizes that it's his behavior (while in character) that causes it, he might just change his tune a little.

All in all, the idea is to be fair and honest with these people, whether in the game or out. Give them every chance to fix the problem on their own, for disruptive behavior of an unruly player ruins the fun for all. If they won't change, then you will have no choice but to ask them to leave the game.

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paladins or rangers can take weapon specialization." It is true, however, that a paladin can take the cavalier kit, but he cannot take the weapon specialization offered to a single-classed fighter. The paladin and ranger are both sub-classes of the warrior and are, therefore, under the rules outlined by the *Unearthed Arcana*, *Player's Handbook* (2nd Edition), and the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*, unable to specialize.

The next point of order: Wow! Where did this mage-knight conglomeration come from? This is kind of like an oxy-moron and goes against every fiber of my being. Talk about power gaming! Let's take a mage character who undoubtedly will be a *fireball* - wielding pain in the gluteus-maximus in a short time to come, and give him a cavalier kit. It is completely against the rules outlined in the *CFH*. On page 36, it states

The point of the AD&D game is not to give one class super abilities but to allow all classes to help in their special way.

that warrior kits are designed to add depth to warrior class characters, and only single-classed warriors can take the warrior kits outlined within the *CFH*.

I personally enjoy the game in its own right with the same old character classes that the game has evolved with all these years. I don't believe we have to experiment with far-flung aggregate type mutations as the mage-knight (not possible, by the way), acrobat-fighter, and the psionicist-necromancer-berserker.

Bruce F. Beyers
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Super Heroes?

I am writing in response to Bruce Beyers' letter in issue #238. Why should we create an "ultimate warrior"? The entire point of the second edition *Player's Handbook* was to balance each characters' strengths and weaknesses, not to have a warrior that could dominate play and take care of every monster.

The cavalier could use a revamping, but allowing him to function at negative hit points and giving him the ability to increase stats is going too far! What happens when the mighty cavalier reaches all 18s in his physical attributes? Suddenly he is jumping up by 10s in hp per level, his AC makes him immune to the average monster's attack, and he

can wack a dragon bone from bone in the blink of an eye.

It is better to use the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills and Powers* book, allowing players to pick and choose their abilities and weaknesses. This way they are gaining nothing for free.

One final note about this letter. The paladin and ranger are not subclasses. Instead, Warriors are a group of classes including paladins, rangers, and fighters. Their special abilities set them apart from the rest of the soldier-of-fortune crowd. The point of the AD&D game is not to give one class super-abilities but to allow all classes help in their special way. Wizards hurl magic, Rogues backstab and pick locks, Priests heal, and Warriors protect all of the above.

Daniel Ingraham
Raleigh, NC

Thieves' Cant

I would like to discuss the Thieves' Cant used in the AD&D game. The *Player's Handbook* describes Thieves' Cant as a dialect of the common tongue unknown to all but thieves. This works fine for most campaigns, but I feel that in many campaigns, the Cant should be treated slightly differently. I would suggest that, depending on the race of the PC and the particular guild that character went to, Thieves' Cant should be available to different languages. I have two reasons for this feeling. One, the AD&D multiverse is populated by slews of humanoid races, some of which (like halflings) are capable of shady activities far beyond humans. With such a diverse selection of races, it seems stupid to declare that each race's society is so different that only human thieves are smart enough to produce their own guilds and slangs. Secondly, many of the AD&D races rarely associate with other races (such as most elves), and therefore it makes sense that thieves of different races would assemble different types of Thieves' Cant. Which languages have Thieves' Cant would be based on the DM's world and choices.

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Doctoring Specialization

I must admit that after reading Chuck Moffat's letter (in issue #238), I felt compelled to dust off my calculator and do some basic math. In Mr. Moffat's letter, he defines "doctor level specialization" as available only to warriors of 15th level or higher.

If we construct a model warrior around Mr. Moffat's rules, then the warrior would be initially possessed of a +8 bonus to hit and to damage his opponents. Furthermore, if we imbue that warrior with the rather unremarkable Strength score of 17, then he now possesses bonuses of +9 to hit and damage. If we add to this model the assumption that at some point during his lengthy adventuring career, our warrior had acquired a *long sword* +2, then his bonuses now stand at +11 to hit and damage. If our model is the minimum level for the "doctor level specialization," then at 15th level, he is enjoying an impressive -5 THAC0.

In combat with the most difficult-to-hit opponent he could possibly face (AC -10), our hero need roll only a 5 or higher on 1d20 to hit his opponent. Worse yet is the horrific damage that our dervish inflicts. With his staggering four attacks per round, this Quisnart will (statistically speaking) strike his opponent an average of three times per round. With a long sword, three hits from the specialist yields 36-57 hp damage per round (3d8 + 33).

My suggestion for our model is that he retire to a quiet life in the lower hells, where he can while away the hours slaying bothersome pit fields.

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Do you have a favorite house rule for the AD&D game? If so, share it with the rest of us! Send your favorite house rule to: "Forum House Rules," *DRAGON Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, or send it via email to dmail@wizards.com. Be sure to include your full name and address along with a note telling us how much of that you'd like printed with your letter.

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This month, the Sage ponders the capabilities of polymorphed creatures, elven resistance to spells, and other troublesome questions from the AD&D® game.

... the question of an elf's resistance to sleep and charm spells has raised its ugly head in our local campaign.

The description for the *polymorph other* spell says that a polymorphed creature does not gain any magical or special abilities that go along with its new form unless a mental change occurs. When the spell recipient gains the new form's mentality, it gains the form's magical and special abilities and resembles a genuine version of the creature. Does that include hit points and Hit Dice? How are hit points assigned? How long does the process take? What happens to a creature that has undergone the mental change and then becomes subjected to a successful *dispel magic* effect? Does the restored creature retain any abilities from the assumed form?

Once the mental change takes place, a polymorphed creature gains all the

assumed form's abilities: Hit Dice, Armor Class, combat abilities, magical abilities, and so on. The DM can re-roll all the creature's hit points or can simply roll all the Hit Dice the creature has gained (or lost) and add (or subtract) the result from the creature's old hit-point total.

Technically, the polymorphed creature gains all its new abilities the instant its mentality changes, though some DMs might require some time before the

creature can use them. I'd suggest one day to one week per ability, depending on how difficult it is to use. The DM rates each ability's difficulty and decides the order in which they become available.

In any case, the mental change is permanent. The creature's newfound abilities, however, remain dependent on the *polymorph other* spell. If the effect is dispelled, the creature reverts to its natural form and loses all abilities that went with it—even purely mental abilities and other powers that the creature's natural form could sustain. Nevertheless, the creature firmly believes the assumed form to be its natural one. A *wish* can remove the delusion. Some DMs also allow *heal* or *restoration* spells to do the trick.

Suppose my character casts a *prayer* spell on himself. If some enemies come into the spells area of effect after my character finishes the spell, does my character gain the spell's bonuses against them so long as the spell is still in effect? Do the newly arrived enemies suffer the spell's penalties against my character? What about my character's allies?

Everyone in the area of effect at the instant a *prayer* spell is cast is affected for the duration of the spell. Those not in the area of effect when the spell is completed are unaffected. All the casters allies gain the listed bonuses (see spell description in the *PHB*). If these characters subsequently encounter foes who have not been affected by the *prayer* spell, they gain all the spell's bonuses, but the foes suffer no penalties from the spell.

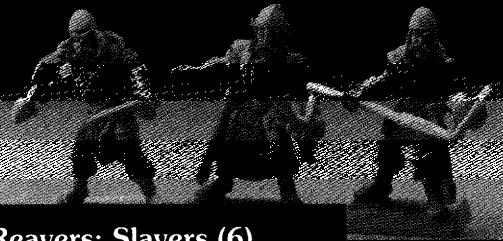
It seems to be an old question, but the question of an elf's resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells has raised its ugly head in our local campaign. Does elf resistance count against any spell of the school of Enchantment/Charm or only against the spells *charm person*, *charm monster*, and *sleep*? If it works against the whole school of Enchantment/Charm, I do indeed think that the race of elves is far too strong to be a player character race and thus should be banned from play.

Yeah, it's an old question, one the Sage has answered before, but here's a better answer: An elf's resistance applies to spells and spell-like effects that allow continuing control over the recipient. These include *charm person*, *charm monster*, *domination*, *fire charm*, a vampire's charm gaze, a harpy's song, and many others. An elf's resistance does not apply to effects that allow limited control or impose a disability, such as *command*, *hold person*, *suggestion*, *quest*, or *geas*. Nor does an elf's resistance prevent outside influences from usurping control of the body, such as *magic jar*.

Any effect that causes the recipient to fall into an enchanted slumber, such as the *sleep* spell or the sleep effect of the *eyebite* spell, is subject to elven resistance. If an opponent uses a *command* or *suggestion* spell to induce an elf to fall asleep, the elf does not gain the benefit of his resistance, but the resulting sleep is not "magical" sleep, and the elf can awaken in response to loud noise, general discomfort, or the like.

Barbarians

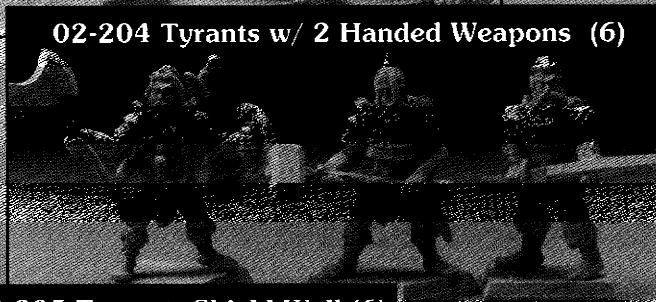
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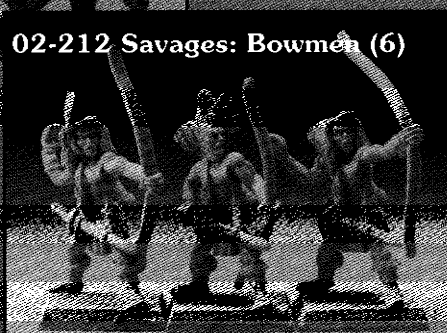
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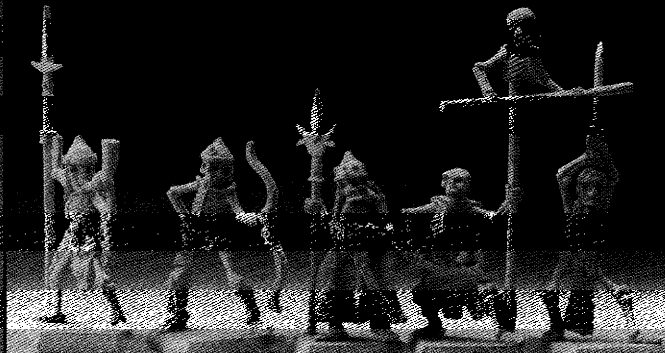


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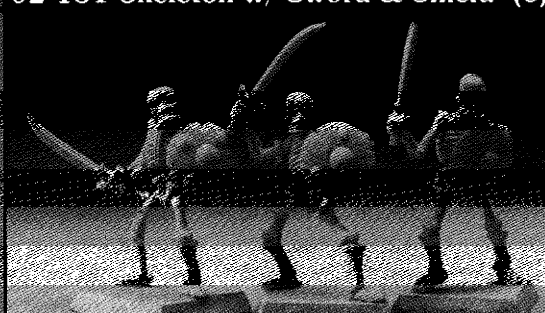


Skeletons

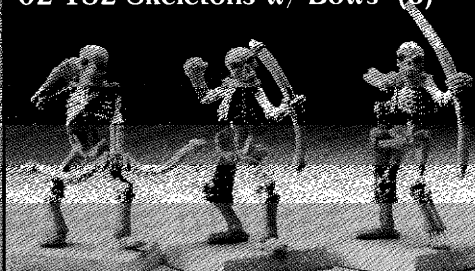
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With the special link between familiars and wizards, could a familiar who has the intelligence to scribe, memorize and learn spells, attempt to learn a spell its master knows? If the wizard failed to learn a particular spell, could his familiar try to learn it?

No and no.

What is the deal with the listing for *monster summoning VIII* in the back of the *Monstrous Manual*TM tome? As far as you've let us know, *monster summoning VIII* is the highest possible (because it's a ninth-level wizard spell).

There actually are some spells higher than 9th level out there (true dweomers, psionic enchantments, and elven high magic to name a few). However, there is no *monster summoning VIII* spell. The listing in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome is an error, but I've always found it useful as an alternate list for the *monster summoning VII* spell.

In the *Player's Handbook*, it is said that paladin can turn baatezu, tanar'ri, and other lower-planar scum. How does the ability work? Are the creatures affected like undead of similar Hit Dice, or is turning them more difficult?

Exactly how does a character with the healing and herbalism proficiencies tend to a poisoned character?

Use the "Special" line on Table 61: Undead Turning for lower planar creatures unless the creature's description says to use another line. Note that paladins themselves can be turned by evil priests. The priest functions as though he were three levels lower than his actual level and uses the line appropriate for the paladin's hit dice.

If a spell has an open-ended duration, one not dependent on time, such as *armor*, *invisibility*, or *contingency*, can a character cast these spells and then re-up with new spells on the following day? Or do these spells take up a spell slot while they last?

A spell vanishes from the caster's memory the moment it's cast, not when it ends. So, yes, a character can memorize a spell he currently has running.

Note, however, that some of the spells on your list have finite durations.

Invisibility, for example, has a maximum duration of 24 hours (see spell description), and *contingency* lasts a maximum of one day per level of the caster. I strongly recommend that you limit *armor* to a maximum duration of one day, too.

If a character dies from a poison with an immediate onset time, can a *neutralize poison* or *slow poison* spell save him if cast on the following round? If not, then it would seem that the vast majority of creatures with these poison types are excessively deadly.

Neither of these spells helps the recipient unless applied before the poison takes effect. Although the *DUNGEON MASTER*[®] *Guide* clearly indicates that the effect of a poison with an immediate onset time is felt the instant it is applied, it's best to allow a *slow poison* or *neutralize poison* spell to save a poisoned creature from death if cast during the same round the recipient was poisoned. The poison might take effect immediately, but the recipient doesn't necessarily die instantly.

Yes, creatures that have venom with an immediate onset time are quite deadly—something people who design monsters overlook all too often.

Exactly how does a character with the healing and herbalism proficiencies tend to a poisoned character? The *PHB* says they must tend them the round immediately following the poisoning and for the next five rounds. My question is, exactly when is the saving throw made? Immediately when poisoned? Delayed until the end of the tending? Re-rolled after the tending? Since timing is everything and nothing is certain, this has caused considerable difficulties in our campaigns (we all handle it a different way).

The healer or healer/herbalist must drop everything and tend the poisoned character during the round when he is poisoned and for the next five rounds. The poisoned character makes his saving throw at the end of the five rounds, not when initially poisoned—the healer must commit to the attempt to cure the poison before he knows what the result

will be. If the group has a healer, it's incumbent upon the DM to make sure the poisoned character doesn't roll a saving throw too soon.

If the poisoned character has received a slow poison spell, you might allow a character who has already failed a saving throw vs. poison a second saving throw if a healer or healer/herbalist tends him before the spell ends.

If a poison is classified Injected, can it be used to coat a weapon? Since "Injected" means it must be put directly in the bloodstream, I think any successful hit (at least 1 hp damage) will count as the poison being injected, since that hit has drawn blood. (You don't coat your hammer with poison.) I know the creature struck has to attempt a saving throw vs. poison, but what damage will the poison cause if the saving throw fails? What happens if the saving throw succeeds? Does the amount of damage the blow inflicted have any effect on what the poison does? Also, how long does the poison last once it's applied to a weapon, and how long does it take to poison a weapon?

Yes, injected poisons can be "injected" with a successful attack by a piercing or slashing (type P or S) weapon coated with the venom. For game purposes, blunt (type B) weapons can't inject poison. While not every "hit" in AD&D game combat necessarily draws blood, it's best to require a creature struck by a poisoned weapon to attempt a saving throw vs. poison anytime a poisoned weapon hits and inflicts damage; though the DM could introduce some additional mechanic, such as a minimal amount of damage (say at least 3 hp damage) or a high attack roll (perhaps a attack roll of 16 or higher or an attack score at least three points higher than the minimum needed to score a hit).

Once the attack delivers the poison, the rules on poison from the *DMG* (Chapter 9) take over, and any damage the weapon inflicted becomes moot. Just roll the saving throw and apply the result. Note that most poisons can inflict some small amount of damage even if the recipient makes a successful saving throw.

The DM has to decide how long a poison remains dangerous once applied to a weapon. I suggest no less than one turn and no more than one day. Use the shorter time for simple liquids that the user just slaps on and the longer time for specially prepared venoms that

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won't rub off or evaporate readily. One successful hit with a poisoned weapon should effectively wipe off all venom, as should exposure to large volumes of water, intense heat, or similar conditions that could remove the venom.

It takes a full round to apply venom to a weapon (no movement or other significant actions allowed), and a character can apply poison that quickly only if the poison is readily at hand. Small weapons, such as arrows or quarrels can be envenomed 10 at a time.

Many referees I know require characters carrying poisoned weapons to attempt saving throws vs. poison every turn or hour to see if the character has scratched himself or had some similar mishap. Success means nothing happens to the character. Failure means the character has poisoned himself.

The characters in my game recently came upon a room where they found a few furnishings and a "cloak" hanging on a peg. At a suggestion from another player, the party thief tried on the

"cloak" only to find that it was a cloaker! The monster proceeded to make mincemeat out of the thief, and then the rest of the party. Now I'm wondering, should I have rolled to see if the cloaker was surprised?

Assuming that the cloaker wasn't aware of the party before the characters entered the room, and wasn't asleep or otherwise distracted, this is what I would have done:

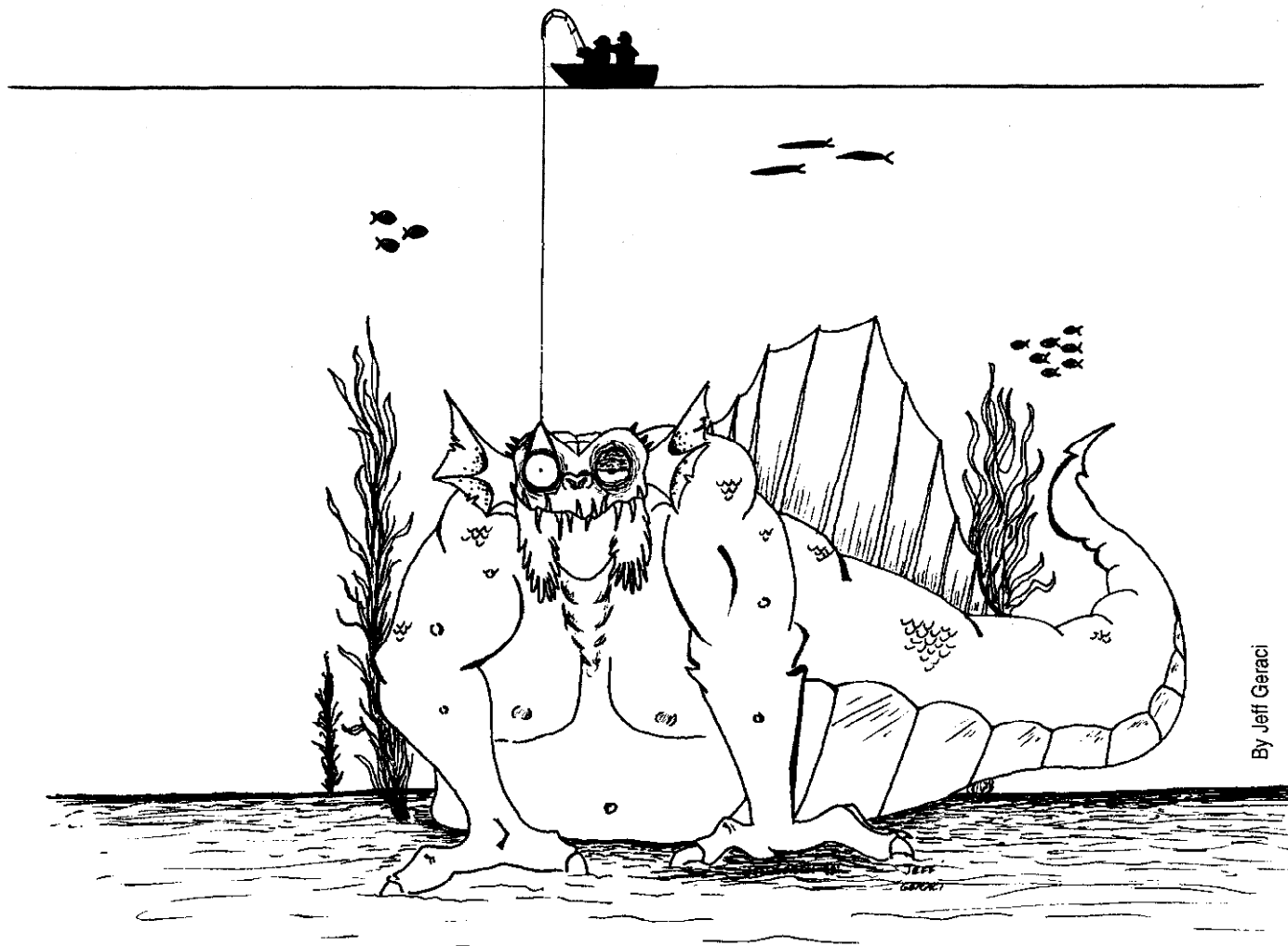
When the party first entered the room, I would have checked to see if the cloaker was surprised (not when the thief grabbed the cloaker). Since cloak-ers spend most of their lives waiting for prey to stumble by, I would have given it a +2 bonus to the roll, as it was prepared to make an attack. If the cloaker had been surprised, I would have decided that the party caught it off guard and that it snapped to its senses when the thief grabbed it. Note that the party would not be aware of the cloaker until the thief woke it up even though they had surprised it.

If the party had not surprised the cloaker, I would have assumed that the cloaker ambushed the party (see *PHB*, Chapter 11), giving it a free attack on the thief, with no defensive bonuses for the thief's Dexterity and a +2 bonus for a rear attack (because the thief was literally trying to wear the cloaker).

In any case, I would have had the party roll for surprise only when they actually discovered the cloaker. The cloaker could have made two free attacks before there was an initiative roll—one when the thief tried to put it on (provided the cloaker was not surprised itself) and one more if the party was surprised.



Skip Williams reports that he wrote the bulk of this month's column on the third floor of a drafty old house where he was a guest. Skip says the garret was well supplied with closets full of old clothes where it was just faintly possible to imagine cloak-ers lurking in the darkest periods of windy nights.



By Jeff Geraci

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The Laws of Spell Design

by Ted Zuvich

illustrated by Scott Rosema

One of the DM's perennial problems is judging a new spell proposed by a creative player. Here is a set of rules, the Laws of Spell Design, intended to help the DM make a rational, objective decision about such potentially unbalancing new spells. The Laws of Spell Design also allow help the DM make faster decisions and point out a number of considerations that the DM otherwise might have overlooked.

Many of the spell design rules have been "reverse-engineered" from existing spell-level assignments. Close examination of the Wizard spells listed in the AD&D® game *Player's Handbook* (PHB) reveals several basic patterns in the level assignments. The Laws of Spell Design address approximately 20 of these basic patterns.

Types of New Spells

Before delving into the detailed Laws of Spell Design, consider the different types of new or proposed spells. When attempting to assign a level to a new spell, the DM should first categorize the spell to help decide which Laws apply. New spells usually fit into one of the following four categories:

A. Very similar to an existing spell, except for minor modifications to one or more explicit spell parameters, such as casting time, required components, duration, range, area of effect, or saving throw. Sometimes players want to just tweak a spell.

B. Somewhat similar to existing spell(s) but may combine one or more effects.

C. Derived from an existing spell, with modifications to major spell parameters such as damage caused, targeting, applicability, prerequisite spells, or effect on the caster.

D. Entirely new spell, totally unrelated to any existing spells.

The Laws of Spell Design are a great help with the first three types of new spells, and they can provide guidance on the fourth type.

Modifying Base Spells

The first step in designing a new spell is to determine which existing spell (or spells) is most similar to the proposed new one. This task is fairly easy if the new spell fits into category A, B, or C. Use the level of the established spell as the base level for the proposed new spell.

Then apply the spell modifiers from **Tables 1** and **2** as required. Note that a proposed spell can have both positive and negative modifiers.

Table 1 summarizes the spell level modifiers that are dependent upon spell parameters (range, components, duration, etc.).

Table 2 summarizes the spell-level modifiers derived from parameters that appear in the spell descriptions, such as number of targets, chance of success, debilitating effects on the caster, etc. Only a few of these laws apply to any given spell. The Law of Damage does not apply to a *fly* (W3) spell, for example.

Example: A player proposes a spell called *shield other*, which acts as *shield spell* except that the caster places the spell on another person. This change shifts the range from personal (able to affect only the caster) to touch. This is a +1 level shift, so the *shield other* spell ranks as a second-level spell. The new spell could be brought back down to first-level by increasing the casting time from under one round to one turn, which would apply a -1 level shift.

Laws that cover the same effect are not additive. For example, the Law of Range (personal to touch) and the Law of Self (caster to target) both apply to the *shield other* spell. However, the spell is not adjusted twice for what is essentially the same effect, so the level assignment goes up by only one level, not two. If, however, the modification involved a change to both range and duration, a +2 level shift would apply.

Generalized Law of Parameters

According to this law, modifying a spell to improve its effects or parameters requires more power. All spell parameters (area of effect, duration, range, number of missiles, number of targets affected, dice of damage, etc.) increase via one of the following three methods, in order of increasing power requirements:

- ❖ Remain constant
- ❖ Increase every X caster levels, where $X > 1$
- ❖ Increase with every caster level

Example: This type of progression is illustrated by the spells *invisibility* (W2), *invisibility 10' radius* (W3), *improved invisibility* (W4), and *mass invisibility* (W7).

If a wizard modifies a spell so that its parameters increase every level instead of



Table 1: Parameter Modifiers to Spell Level

SPELL PARAMETER	+1 LEVEL	NO CHANGE	-1 LEVEL
General parameter . . .	... increases with every caster level.	... increases every X caster levels (X > 1).	... remains constant.
Law of Range Range of spell is . . .	... ranged.	... touch.	... personal (0).
If spell is ranged, range . . .	... increases with caster level.	... is constant.	—
Law of Components Spell requires . . .	... no material components.	... material plus either verbal or somatic components.	—
Material components are . . .	... cheap (≤ 1 gp/level) and easily obtained.	... moderately expensive (≤ 10 gp/spell level) and available.	... expensive (≥ 100 gp/spell level) and rarely available.
Are expensive material components consumed?	No.	Yes, or no but components are very expensive (5-10 times cost).	—
Law of Duration Duration (non-damaging spells) is . . .	... one or more hours/caster level or until triggered; if permanent, +2 levels shift.	... less than one hour/caster level.	... fixed or less than one round/caster level.
Duration (damaging spells) is . . .	... less than one round.	... instantaneous or one round.	—
Law of Time Casting time is . . .	... an initiative modifier < the spell level.	... an initiative modifier greater than or equal to the spell level but less than one turn.	... one turn or more.
Law of Areas Area of Effect . . .	... increases more than 10'/level.	... increases in multiples of 10'/caster level.	... remains constant with caster level.
Law of Resistance Saving throw?	None. (+2 levels)	Allows save for 1/2 effect.	Negates.
Adjustment to save . . .	For each -2 in penalties.	None.	For each +2 in bonuses.

every other level, the base spell level increases by +1. Likewise, if the wizard modifies a spell with constant parameters so that the parameters increase every level, the base spell level increases by +1. This law applies to most parameters, implicit or explicit. That is why its called the “generalized” law.

Example: *Modifying the magic missile (W1) spell so that the caster could fire one missile per caster level would make the modified spell second-level.*

In addition, use the following six laws to modify spell level when modifying explicit spell parameters.

Law of Range

The following range categories appear in order of increasing power requirement:

- ❖ Personal (or zero).
- ❖ Touch.
- ❖ Range remains constant with caster level.
- ❖ Range increases every X caster levels, where X > 1.
- ❖ Range increases every caster level.

Modifying a spell to improve the range makes the new spell one level higher than the original spell. The idea of shifting a spell from personal to touch is also related to the Law of Self. In addition, wizards can affect something they are in

contact with more easily than something that is at a distance, although this factor is not usually worth a level of difference.

Example: *Shield is a first-level spell with a range of 0 (caster only). A shield other spell that allowed the caster to place a shield on another person within touch range would be a second-level spell.*

Law of Components

There are three aspects to the Law of Components:

1. Spell components, in particular material components, provide part of the power or open the pathways to allow spells to work. Given equal spell

levels, a spell that requires material (M) components accomplishes more than one that does not.

2. Expensive components (those with a value of 100 gp or more per spell level) provide more power than cheap components. A spell with expensive, consumed material components accomplishes as much as a spell one level higher. Conversely, a spell with cheap consumed components accomplishes less.

3. The use of material components assumes that those components are consumed by the spell. Expensive, reusable components have the same effect as moderately costly consumed components—i.e., no effect on spell level. However, very expensive (valued at 500 gp or more per spell level), reusable components might have an effect on assigned spell level.

Example: Find familiar (W1) accomplishes a very powerful effect through the use of a long casting time and expensive, consumed material components.

Law of Duration

The time increments of spell duration are (in order of increasing power requirements):

- Instant.
- Round.
- Round(s).
- Turns.
- Hours.
- Days.
- Until triggered.
- Permanent.

Duration is inversely proportional to raw spell power. A spell can accomplish a weak effect for a long time, or a powerful effect for a very short time. Damaging spells (such as *fireball*, W3) typically cause all their damage in one round. Damaging spells that persist for more than one round are either higher level or obey the Law of Damage. Modifying a damaging spell with an instant duration so that it persists for more than one round involves a level shift of +2. Modifying a non-offensive spell so that it persists for more than one round involves a +1 level shift.

A spell that passively waits for an event to happen is less effective than one aimed at a specific event. Consider the difference between *fire trap* and *fireball*. Contingency type spells that last until triggered require significant amounts of power. A damaging spell that waits until someone triggers it (*fire*

trap, W4) is higher level than one that goes off instantly, damage being equal (*burning hands*, W1).

Example: A player proposes extended shield, which is the same as shield except that the duration is five turns per level instead of five rounds per level. The increase in duration from “rounds” to “turns” causes a +1 level increase, making extended shield a second-level spell.

Law of Time

Simply put, the law of time states that given two spells of equal level, the spell with the longer casting time is more powerful. Casting time must increase by two categories to gain a level of effectiveness. For example, the casting time must increase from less than one round (with initiative modifier) to turns, or from rounds to hours.

Specifying a casting time is a very important consideration when designing a spell. Will the spell be a quick-fire incantation useful in a combat situation? Or will it be a slow, deliberate ritual requiring long preparation? Wizard spells can be divided roughly into two categories as a function of casting time: incantations and rituals. The following table summarizes the classification scheme:

Casting Time	Type of Spell
≤ One Round	Incantation
Rounds	Incantation or Ritual
Turns	Ritual
Hours	Ritual
Days	Ritual

Incantations have a casting time of one round or less. Examples of incantations include *magic missile* (W1), *shield* (W1), and *levitate* (W2). Incantations are battle-oriented spells that must be cast quickly. These extremely quick spells sacrifice power for speed. Incantations usually have a duration of less than one turn per level, although there are exceptions such as *Tenser's floating disc* (W1), *rope trick* (W2), and *web* (W2).

Rituals have a casting time of one turn or more, most likely one turn per level or even one hour per level. Examples include *armor* (W1), *find familiar* (W1), *identify* (W1), and *strength* (W2). Rituals generate powerful effects compared to incantations of the same level. Rituals often require esoteric material components and extensive preparation. Rituals are utility-type spells that perform a specific task or place a temporary enchantment upon an item. Spells that

Example Spell
Shield Vessel

Third-Level Wizard Spell
Evocation
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 vessel
Saving Throw: None

The *shield vessel* spell allows the wizard to place a *shield* spell around a vehicle (usually a seagoing ship), protecting everyone within the area of effect. The spell protects the crew of the vessel just as the *shield* spell protects its caster. It negates *magic missile* attacks and provides AC 2 protection against hand-hurled missiles, etc. Since the shield effect totally surrounds the vessel, anyone aboard receives a +1 bonus to saving throws against attacks that originate from off the ship. The spell provides no protection from attackers that successfully board the ship.

The material component of the spell is a series of finely wrought pieces of silver jewelry made to resemble small shields. The silver shields must be placed around the perimeter of the vessel to be protected. The total value of the shields must be at least 1,500 gp, although the wizard is free to put more money into the shields. The silver shields are not consumed by the spell. If the total value of the shields falls below 1,500 gp (through wear, battle-damage, vandalism, theft, etc.), the *shield vessel* spell immediately fails.

Notes: Since this spell is obviously derived from *shield* (W1), it is a base first-level spell. The Law of Ranges applies, since the range has moved from personal (0) to touch, for a +1 modifier to spell level. The Law of Targeting applies, since the spell now affects multiple targets within an area instead of a single target, for a +1 modifier to the base spell level. Finally, the Law of Areas applies, since the spell now protects an area, not just the caster. This makes *shield vessel* a fourth-level spell, which is higher than the player wanted. However, the player proposes the use of expensive, reusable components (500 gp per spell level) to make up the difference. By the Law of Components, this allows a -1 modifier to the spell level. The net effect is that *shield vessel* should be a W3 spell with a +3 modifier to initiative for casting.

Table 2: Implicit Parameter Modifiers to Spell Level

SPELL PARAMETER	+1 LEVEL	NO CHANGE	-1 LEVEL
Law of Changes Method of creation:	Actually creates.	-	Modifies.
Method of destruction:	Actually destroys.	Modifies or moves.	—
Duration of changes:	Permanent.	Long (>1 turn/level) but finite.	Temporary.
Law of Control Caster controls spell and may perform . . .	... any other actions.	... some other actions.	... no other actions.
Law of Damage Damage potential is . . .	... >1d6/caster level.	... 1d6/caster level.	... <1d6/caster level.
Law of Expertise Caster rolls to hit and . . .	-	... target allowed no save.	... target allowed save.
Caster attacks as . . .	... fighter of caster level.	... wizard of caster level.	—
Law of Forms Spell has . . .	... multiple forms.	... single form.	—
Law of information Spell provides information and has a . . .	... greater than 10%/caster level chance of success.	... probability of success \leq 10%/caster level.	... fixed probability of success.
Law of the Mage's Price Debilitating effects?	—	None.	Automatic but temporary (-1); chance of permanent debilitation or death (-2)
Law of Metaspells Spell has prerequisites?	—	No.	Yes.
The spell . . .	... enhances spell effect or modifies effective caster spell ability.	provides chance to counter-act or negate other spells.	—
Law of Presence Subject present by . . .	... conjuration.	... summoning.	... illusion.
Law of Self Target of spell is . . .	—	... any target, possibly including caster.	... only the caster.
Law of Self-Knowledge Viable targets are . . .	—	... any animate or sentient target.	... inanimate, non-sentient.
Law of Specifics Generality:	Very specific one purpose.	Some variations.	Very general, several possible applications.
Law of Targeting Number of targets . . .	... increases every caster level.	... increases every X caster levels.	... remains constant, usually one target.
Spell is detrimental to target and . . .	... allows selection of multiple specific targets.	... single, specific target only.	... blankets area, no specific targeting.

Note: See the text for discussion of the Law of Power and The Final Law.

create a permanent, long lasting (more than one turn per level), or "until triggered" effects are rituals. A low-level ritual spell with the same effect as casting a *fireball* could be designed, but in the two or more turns required to cast the spell, the orcs would be roasting the wizard over a slow fire instead of crackling in the fading embers of a fast fireball.

Conjuration and summoning spells are often (but not always) rituals, especially if they summon a powerful creature. Examples include *mount* (W1), *phantom steed* (W3), and *conjure elemental* (W5). Many other conjuration/summoning spells walk the fine line between ritual and incantation, with casting times of a round or more.

Example: Consider the proposal instant strength, a spell that acts just as strength (W2) except that the casting time shifts from one turn to less than one round, with one point of initiative modifier per spell level (+2 casting time shifts). As a result, instant strength would be a third-level spell with an initiative modifier of +3.

Law of Areas

Areas of effect normally increase with caster level in increments of 10 feet; either a 10' x 10' square or a cube 10 feet on a side. Spells with constant areas of effect require less power than spells with increasing areas of effect. However, if area is given as constant, the area should be fairly small, such as one object or an area under 10 feet per side. The DM should disallow attempts to lower the level of a spell by specifying a large, constant area, since this violates the intent of the rule. A shift from a small area of effect to a large area would require a +1 shift in level, and vice versa.

Example: A wizard creates a mass fumble spell that acts as a fumble (W4), except that the area of effect is one 10'-cube per level. Since the spell is shifting from a small, constant area of effect (30'-cube) to an area of effect that increases with level, the mass fumble spell is fifth-level.

Law of Resistance

As a baseline, if a spell is detrimental to the target, the target receives a saving throw that negates the spell. Saving throws modify spell level according to the following table:

Saving Throw	Modification
None	+2
Halves	0
Negates	-1

Therefore, a spell that allows the target no chance to resist is two levels higher than a spell that allows the target a normal chance to resist the effects and three levels higher than a spell that allows the target a saving throw to negate the effects entirely. Significant penalties or bonuses to the target's saving throw (+2 or more) also shift the assigned spell level by +/-1 level.

Example: A firebomb spell that acts as a fireball but allows no saving throw would be a fifth-level spell (+2 level shift).

The target does not receive a saving throw against spells that are beneficial to the target or that do not directly affect the target. There is no saving throw vs. *strength*, for example, or against *monster summoning*. Spells of this sort are not subject to the Law of Resistance.

Implicit Spell Parameters

The laws below discuss some (but not necessarily all) of the implicit parameters.

Law of Changes

Change has three aspects: *creation*, *destruction*, and *modification*.

Creating something from nothing is harder than changing something that is already there (related to the Law of Presence). Truly creating something from nothing is difficult or impossible. Instead of making a spell to create gold, design a spell that extracts trace gold from the surrounding environment. If a spell truly creates something, it is two levels higher than a spell that simply modifies something that already exists.

Actually *destroying* something is very difficult. Spells are easier if they simply put the object somewhere else, or change its nature (rapid oxidation, polymorph, etc.). Spells that actually destroy the target are two levels higher than spells that alter the target.

Permanently and truly *modifying* the essential makeup of the world is difficult or impossible. For instance, changing lead into gold (permanently) is very difficult. Inducing a permanent change is still easier than creating something, but inducing a temporary or illusionary change (*fool's gold*, W2) is the simplest, easiest approach.

Law of Control

Most spells do not require any sort of control once they are cast. *Mirror image* (W2), for example, simply performs its function without any interference from the caster. However, some spells require active control. For these spells, there are

Example Spell

Silver-Steel
Fifth-Level Wizard Spell
Alteration
Range: Touch
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5 turns
Area of Effect: One object, up to one lb./level
Saving Throw: None

The silver-steel spell magically reinforces silver so that it has all the properties of high-quality stainless steel (toughness, ductility, hardness, ability to be forged and retain an edge, etc.), while retaining its silver sheen, its corrosion-resistant properties, and its ability to hit some undead and extraplanar creatures. Items fashioned of silver-steel are 25% heavier than their steel counterparts. Armor and weapons fashioned of this material are no better or worse than items fashioned of normal high-grade steel. The magic of this spell fades within 15 rounds of application and cannot be reversed or dispelled after this time.

The spell requires a piece of high-grade stainless steel weighing not less than 10% of the weight of the silver object to be transformed. The cost of the special steel (not the sort of steel used in normal armor and weapons) is at least 25 gp per pound. The steel is consumed by the spell. In addition, the spell consumes silver equal in weight to the silver that is transformed.

Notes: This spell is derived from *glassteel* (W8). Since it is a lower level spell, it must have significant modifications, which are as follows. First, the components are fairly expensive. A pound of silver is worth at least 5 gp, and the special steel is also expensive. This is much more expensive than the components for *glassteel*. The Law of Components provides a -1 level shift. Second, the spell affects only one lb. of material per caster level, instead of ten lbs. per level. Therefore the Law of Areas provides a -1 level shift. The spell is also a ritual (multiple turn casting time) instead of an incantation (casting time under one round). The Law of Casting Times provides a -1 shift. These modifications make silver-steel a fifth-level spell instead of eighth.

Detrimental Effects for Spellcasting

Spell	Detrimental Effect
<i>Find Familiar</i>	Caster and familiar are "linked."
<i>Identify</i>	Temporary loss of Constitution; enforced rest.
<i>Haste</i>	Recipient ages one year.
<i>Dimension Door</i>	Wizard can be trapped in astral plane.
<i>Polymorph Other</i>	Target must save vs. system shock or die; wizard can inadvertently kill friends.
<i>Shout</i>	Permanent hearing damage if used more than once 1/day.
<i>Conjure Elemental</i>	Caster must maintain concentration or the summoned elemental attacks the caster.
<i>Contact Other Plane</i>	Probability that the caster goes insane or dies.
<i>Leomund's Secret Chest</i>	A 1% chance per week that chest is tampered with; opens temporary ethereal window.
<i>Teleport</i>	Probability of death or injury.
<i>Enchant an item</i>	Very precise requirements and preparations that effectively take the caster out of play for the casting.
<i>Ensnarement</i>	Entrapped creature can break free and attack caster.
<i>Tenser's Transformation</i>	Caster is unable to withdraw from combat.
<i>Duo-Dimension</i>	Caster exists partially in astral plane and is vulnerable to astral attack.
<i>Limited Wish</i>	Automatically ages the caster.
<i>Clone</i>	Clone has antipathy toward original; possible insanity
<i>Permanency</i>	Loss of Constitution.
<i>Energy drain</i>	Chance of losing Constitution.
<i>Mordenkainen's disjunction</i>	Attracts notice of extraplanar beings; possible loss of spellcasting abilities.
<i>Wish</i>	Aging; temporary ability score loss and rest required.

three distinct levels of spell control. Moving a spell between the different levels of control requires a one-level shift.

Spells of the first type require continuous caster concentration, immediately cease if the caster's concentration lapses, and preclude any other action by the caster. These types of spells require the least power of the "control required" spells. Examples of these spells include *phantasmal force* (W1) and *emotion* (W4).

Spells of the second type require continuous caster concentration, persist for a "short" duration after concentration lapses, and might allow some limited actions (moving slowly, etc.) while the spell lasts. A spell that allows a caster to do other things after it has been cast is higher level than one that requires continuous concentration. An example of this type of spell is *improved phantasmal force* (W2).

Spells of the third type maintain themselves once cast and allow other actions. An example of this type of spell is *phantasmal killer* (W4).

Law of Damage

As a baseline, damaging spells cause 1d6 hp damage per level of the caster, or an average of 3.5 hp per level. Spells that

inflict more damage (such as 1d8 per level) are higher level, and vice versa.

Law of Expertise

If the wizard must roll to hit in order for the spell to be effective, this action takes the place of a target saving throw. Spells that allow the caster to use a better-than-normal THAC0 are one level higher than those that restrict the caster to the caster's THAC0.

Example: Melf's minute meteors (W3) requires the caster to roll to hit the target, but the target is not allowed a saving throw. A modified version of the spell that allows the mage to attack as a fighter of equivalent level would be a fourth-level spell.

Law of Forms

Spells with two or more forms (e.g., *irritation* [W2], *fire shield* [W4], *emotion* [W4]) are higher level than spells with a single form. This law assumes that the caster specifies which form will be used at the time of memorization. If the caster can specify the form at the time of casting, the spell is even more powerful.

Example: Ice storm (W4) has two forms, and the caster can specify which form is used at the time of casting. Ice storm

could be a third-level spell if split into two different spells (e.g., hail storm [W3] and sleet storm [W3]).

Law of Information

Spells that provide information are usually difficult, with long casting times. The higher the probability of clear and accurate information, the higher level the spell. The usual chance of success is 10% per level of the caster. Informational spells often carry the possibility of caster debilitation.

Law of the Mage's Price

Spells normally have no debilitating effects on the caster, but some spells include a chance of a detrimental effect on the caster as a way to lower the level at which they can be cast. See the **Detrimental Effects for Spellcasting** sidebar for a listing of some of the spells with detrimental effects.

Spells that have temporary but significant debilitating effects (such as *identify* [W1]) provide one level in effectiveness. If *identify* had no detrimental effects, it would not be a first-level spell. Temporary debilitating effects are usually automatic and last anywhere from hours to days. Examples of temporary effects include: a decrease in an ability score, a loss of hit points, a need for the caster to rest afterward, or some combination thereof.

There are two types of permanent debilitating effects. If the debilitating effect is non-lethal but serious, the debilitating effect is automatic. Examples of this type of effect include the aging caused by *wish* (W9) and *haste* (W3), and the ability score losses caused by *permanency* (W8). If the debilitating effect is insanity or death (something that removes the caster from play), the caster should have a chance (usually a saving throw) to avoid the effect. Spells that have a chance (saving throw) of inflicting permanent significant debilitation (e.g., insanity, permanent aging, permanent loss of hp) or as little as a 1% chance of causing death (such as *contact other plane* [W5] and *teleport* [W5]) gain two levels in effectiveness.

Example: Burnout (W1) acts as a fireball cast by a 5th-level wizard and has a casting time of less than one round, with an initiative modifier of +3. The caster must save vs. spells or die of massive system shock from the magical backlash. If the saving throw succeeds, the caster still suffers 5 hp damage. This spell accomplishes a higher-level effect because it has possible deadly consequences (-2 level shift) to the caster.



Some non-damaging spells have detrimental effects on the target. These include *haste* (W3) and *polymorph other* (w4).

Law of Metaspells

There are two types of metaspells: prerequisite spells and those that accomplish spell alteration.

Prerequisite spells are those that the caster must cast just prior to casting the spell of interest. The shift for prerequisites counts only once. If a spell has two prerequisites, the shift remains one level.

Example: *Conjure elemental* (W5) provides an excellent example of a spell with prerequisites. While protection from evil (W1) is not strictly required, any wise wizard will cast it prior to attempting to summon an elemental. Permanency (W8) and contingency (W6) are also good examples of spells with prerequisites.

The second category of metaspells includes those that directly affect other spells, those that affect the parameters of other spells (altering casting time, duration, area of effect, etc.), and those that affect the caster's ability to use spells. Metaspells of this type must be third-level or higher. Spells in this category include *dispel magic* (W3), *Rary's*

mnemonic enhancer (W4), *extension* (W4), and *permanency* (W8).

Example: To get around designing a ranged version of every spell with a range of personal, a mage could research and create a metaspell specifically for this purpose. The far reaching spells in the *Tome of Magic* are good examples.

Law of Power

This law is invoked when the new spell attempts to meld two (or more) existing spells into a new spell. The Law of Power states that each new spell level has approximately twice the power of the previous level. A first-level spell has a power ranking of 1, a second-level spell is worth 2, a third-level spell is worth 4, and so on. Theoretically, two second-level spells could be combined to form a third-level spell. Applications of the Law of Power are often quite complex.

Example: A player proposes a new spell called *gird*, which combines the effects of strength and shield. Strength is a ritual-type spell with a casting time of one turn. The player wants to increase the duration of the shield effect to match the duration of the strength effect (one hour per level). The

Law of Duration says that the proposed shield effect makes it a second-level spell. Applying the *Law of Power*, the two spells combine to form a third-level spell. However, in this case the gain is minimal. It basically allows the caster to deploy two spells in one turn instead of two spells in one turn and a round. To make the *gird* spell useful, the casting time needs to drop to be less than one round. Making this change (applying the *Law of Time*) would increase the spell level by one, making *gird* a fourth-level spell with a casting time less than one round and an initiative modifier of +4.

Law of Presence

Illusions provide an appearance of an object or creature that is really not there. Therefore, illusions are easier than summoning, which actually calls the object or creature from the surrounding area. Summoning is in turn easier than conjuring, which calls the creature or object regardless of where it is at the moment, even if it does not really exist.

The spell *phantasmal force* (W1) provides an excellent example of a very general spell which uses illusion to accomplish a great deal. To make some of the stuff dreamed up via *phantasmal*

Table 3: Base Spell Parameters

School	Range	Components	Duration	Casting Time	Area of Effect	Saving Throw
Abjuration	Personal or Short.	V, S, M	5 rounds +5 rounds ¹ .	<1 round	Usually caster; short range.	None.
Alteration ³	Typically 10 yards ¹ .	V, S, M	Highly variable, some rounds, some permanent.	<1 round	Typically one creature or 10' cube.	None.
Conjuration-Summoning	Small area.	V, S, M	Turns ¹ .	<1 round	Target.	None.
Divination	Caster.	V, S, M (E)	Several rounds ¹ .	<1 round	One creature, target, or small area.	None.
Enchantment/ Charm	Fixed or Short ¹ .	V, S	Highly variable ² .	<1 round	Target	Negates.
Evocation/Invocation	Fixed or Short ¹ .	V, S, M	Rounds ¹ or instantaneous.	<1 round	Constant.	None or ½ ⁴ .
Illusion/ Phantasm	10 yards ¹ or 0 ⁵ .	V, S ⁶	Conditional ⁷ .	<1 round	10; cube ¹	Target must disbelieve, then negates.
Necromantic	Touch or constant	V, S ⁸	Rounds to permanent, typically turns.	<1 round	One target	None; negates if target is animate.

Notes

1. Per caster level.

2. Charms typically last days; enchantments have durations of rounds if animate, long or permanent if inanimate.

3. Inanimate target.

4. Evocation/Invocation spells that cause damage allow a saving throw for half damage. Other types allow no save.

5. If the illusion/Phantasm is cast on a target (e.g., *Nystul's magic aura*, *spook*), the range is 0. Otherwise, range is 30 yards +10 yards per level.

6. Most Illusion/Phantasm spells with material components have cheap components, on the order of cheap cardboard props. Expensive components go a long way toward improving the power of an Illusion/Phantasm spell.

7. Lasts until caster ceases to concentrate or some special condition is satisfied. Very powerful,

battle-oriented illusions typically have a duration of rounds.

8. Necromantic spells with material components tend to be quite powerful.

X = level of spell (casting time) or level of caster (damage)

E = expensive components

force would require a significant amount of magic. *Improved phantasmal force* is an illustration of the movement from "concentration required" to a self-maintaining, caster-alterable spell.

Law of Self

Casters affect themselves more easily than anybody or anything else. A spell that affects only the caster is easier than a spell that affects someone else by touch, which is in turn easier than a spell that affects another at a range. A caster can also affect something that belongs to him with greater ease than he can affect something that belongs to somebody else, although this usually is not worth a level of difference.

Example: Polymorph self (W4) has considerable advantages compared to the

polymorph other (W4) spell and provides an excellent illustration of this law.

Law of Self Knowledge

Excluding damaging spells, the nature of the target has a great deal to do with how powerful the spell has to be in order to succeed. Spells designed to affect only inanimate objects or manipulate forces are fairly easy. Spells that affect non-sentient beings are of "nominal difficulty." Spells designed to affect sentient beings are one level higher.

Law of Specifics

A spell with a specific purpose has an advantage over a general spell of the same level when it comes to the specific purpose for which it was designed. For

example, *item* (W3) miniaturizes virtually any item designated by the caster. If a wizard designed a spell that miniaturized only fires, the proposed spell can either a) have a much longer duration than *item*, or b) be one level lower than *item*. The DM should use care when applying this law; it is easily abused.

The Law of Specifics especially applies to protective spells. To fully protect against a specific type of magical attack, use a defensive spell of the same level that is specifically designed to ward against that spell.

Example: A protection from fireballs spell would be third-level and would provide full protection from fireball spells. It might even provide some protection from lower-level fire magic. This is more specific than a general protection from fire spell, which

would be fourth-level and would provide general protection from all sources of fire.

Example: Charm monster (W4) is more general than charm person (W1), which is more general than charm Spaethe (a specific person). If Spaethe were to fall victim to a charm Spaethe spell, saving throw penalties would apply, or the duration of the spell would vastly increase.

Law of Targeting

There are two concerns relative to spell targeting: the number of targets and the selection of targets. Spells that affect more targets as the caster increases in experience are more powerful than spells that affect a constant number of targets. This Law is similar to the Generalized Law of Parameters. The ability of the caster to select targets also affects the spell level. Spells that blanket an area with no control over whom (or what) they affect are one level lower. Spells that allow the caster to select one target in an area are of “nominal” difficulty. Spells that allow the caster to pick multiple specific targets in an area (such as slow, W3) are hard (one level higher).

The Final Law

The last Law of Spell Design is that “there will be exceptions.” There are a number of spells in the *Player's Handbook* that simply do not fit these patterns. See the sidebar “Aberrant Spells” for notes on some of the more distinguished pattern-breakers. When adjudicating a spell that does not fit a pattern, the DM should exercise caution and common sense.

Base Spells

Here are some of the basic concepts that guided the “reverse engineering” of spells for the creation of The Laws of Spell Design. The most useful tool in this endeavor was the idea of base spells, the templates for other spells. Base spells establish the parameters for “average” spells of a given school. A typical base spell has the following characteristics:

- ❖ It has a relatively short range that increases with caster level.
- ❖ It requires material components that are consumed during the casting.
- ❖ If offensive, it has a duration of one round. Other types of spells establish an effect that lasts for less than one turn per caster level.
- ❖ It has a casting time of less than one round, with an initiative modifier of +1 per spell level.
- ❖ It affects a limited area or number of targets, increasing with caster level.

❖ If the spell is offensive, the target receives a saving throw to negate all or part of the effect. Otherwise, there is no saving throw.

Each spell school has a different set of base spell parameters, as presented in **Table 3**, which summarizes the attributes of a typical spell of each school. Note that each school has wide variations in base spell parameters. There are abjurations with long ranges, illusions with expensive material components, and enchantments with casting times of hours or days, just to list a few of the variations.

New spells are judged on how they deviate from the base spell. If the spell is modified to make it harder to cast or less effective, the spell level drops. If the spell becomes easier to cast or more effective, the spell level increases. Use the Laws of Spell Design to determine how much to increase or decrease the spell level.

Example: A player proposes a spell called divination ward, which acts just as a non-detection (W3) spell except that the spell does not require any material components. Since abjuration spells normally require a material component, the law of components is invoked and divination ward becomes a fourth-level spell.

Judging Originality: Researching Derivative Spells

When adjudicating a new spell, the DM must also address the issue of when a new spell is truly original. Under the optional rules, researched spells do not count toward the wizard's maximum number of spells known. Allowing a wizard to circumvent the limits on the maximum number of spells known by researching directly derivative spells could affect game balance. Therefore, use the following modifications to spell research of derivative spells.

A spell is a derivative if it is a direct, easily recognized modification of an existing spell. The connection should be fairly obvious. Examples from this article include *gird* and *shield other*. If the new spell is a direct derivative of an established spell, it fills half a “slot” toward the wizard's maximum number of spells known. Two directly derivative spells would count as one learned spell for the purposes of calculating the maximum number of spells known by the wizard.

Wizards who know an established spell can research direct derivatives of that spell in half the usual time and at half the usual expense—and earning half the normal XP researching such spells.

Aberrant Spells

Not all existing spells obey the Laws of Spell Design.

❖ *Magic Missile* (W1) has a quick casting time, no material components, and a decent range. Furthermore, the caster need not roll to hit, can affect multiple targets, and allows the target no saving throw.

❖ The *continual light* spell (W2) represents an aberration in the pattern of the Law of Duration. The spell is quite powerful, very quick to cast, and creates a permanent effect. Increasing the casting time to two turns could rectify this imbalance.

❖ Since *dispel magic* (W3) can directly affect other spells, it violates the law of Metaspells.

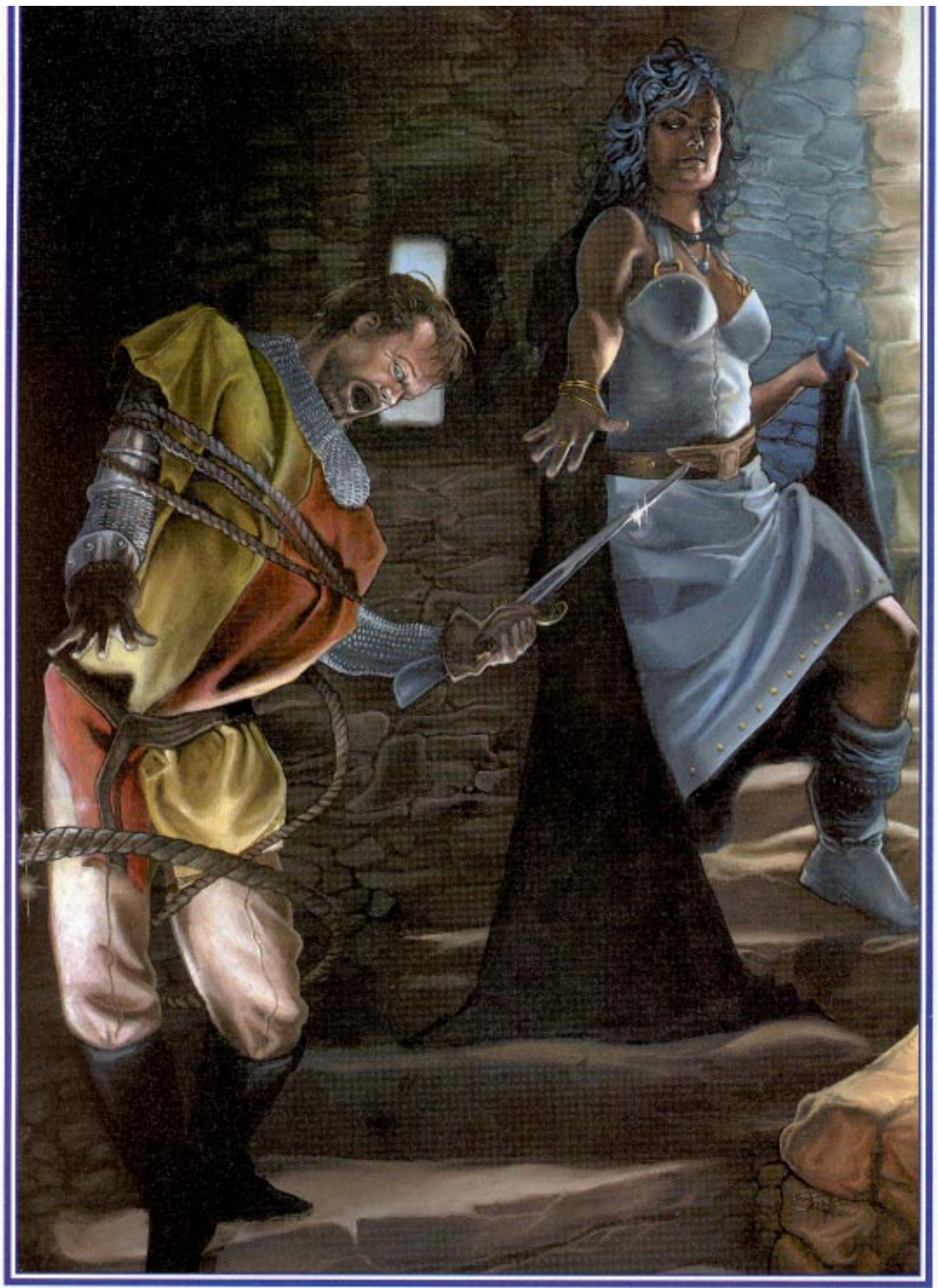
❖ *Stoneskin* (W4) provides absolute immunity from multiple forms of physical attack. It has a short casting time, relatively cheap components, and is “general” protective magic. As such, it is probably too powerful for its assigned level. It could be brought back into line by requiring expensive material components (100 gp or more of diamond dust) and a longer casting time (turns).

Be generous when deciding the issue of originality. Even one small sparkle of originality should take a spell out of the directly derivative classification.

The DM must also consider how much effort a wizard must expend to add a new spell to the campaign. In some settings, a wizard can easily obtain practically any new spell desired. At the other extreme, some worlds require wizards to research each and every new spell they learn, whether it's a “standard” spell or a totally new one. The level of difficulty in obtaining spells should affect the XP awarded for researching new spells. The harder it is to obtain new spells, the more XP the wizard should receive when the wizard actually researches a new spell.



Ted Zuvich reports that he's having quite a bit of trouble finding time to write these days, but he hopes he'll find more time soon, especially since the TSR crew has moved to the Seattle area. Ted also plays a mean game of Iron Dragon.



The Magic of Krynn Reborn

"There may be other magic.
It is up to you to find it."
— Paladine, speaking to
Palin Majere,
Dragons of Summer Flame

Spells for the Fifth Age

by Stephen Kenson

illustrated by John Stanko

In the aftermath of the Chaos War and the departure of the gods from the world of Krynn, the powers of magic known to the people of Krynn were lost. The mages' memorized formulae and the clerics' prayers yielded them no magical power. The magic-workers of Krynn were forced to seek other sources of magic in the Fifth Age of Krynn, better known as the Age of Mortals.

In time, the people of Krynn discovered those other sources of magic that Paladine spoke of, drawn from ancient powers from the dawn of the world's history. The story of the discovery of these new forms of magic—sorcery and mysticism—is detailed in the *DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™* game.

Sorcery and mysticism are different in many ways from the magic that mages and clerics once wielded on Krynn. Both forms have their own unique advantages and limitations that have changed the way people work magic. Sorcerers cannot affect the bodies, minds, and spirits of living creatures as mages once could; even simple charm spells are beyond them. At the same time, mystics cannot affect unliving matter or energy as many of the clerics of the old gods could. The power to call down flame strikes and shape the elements is lost to them.

These changes have forced students of the new magics to be innovative in the use of their abilities. Many of the old spells and enchantments of the Fourth Age have been reworked by sorcerers and mystics for their use, while others have been abandoned by all but a few academics and scholars. Meanwhile, new spells and enchantments have been created by students of the Academy of Sorcery and the Citadel of Light.

Here are some of the vast range of possibilities for sorcery and mysticism in the Fifth Age, using the SAGA™ System rules. They include some of the old Fourth Age spells that have been adapted by modern spellcasters on Krynn as well as some new spells unique to the Fifth Age. Each spell lists all of its properties, its casting difficulty, and spell point cost and gives a short description of the spell and its effects.

Sorcery Spells

Audible Glamer

School: Aeromancy
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Near missile
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Small room
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 12

The creation of audible illusions was a problem that troubled many sorcerers. Students of the school of spectramancy had long since developed the creation of visual illusions of light, but it was some time before students of aeromancy hit upon the idea of using the controlled movement of air to create sounds.

This spell creates any fairly simple, meaningless sound that the caster desires: the babble of conversations (but not actual words or messages), scuffling, wheezing, and so on. The sound is loud enough to be heard clearly in a small room, but it becomes much less audible at greater distances unless the listener has acute hearing.



Bind

School: Enchantment
Invocation: Instant
Range: Melee
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Individual
Effect: Impeding
Difficulty/Cost: 14

With this spell, the sorcerer enchants a length of rope, chain or other such flexible material with animation that allows it to follow his commands. By making an average Perception action against a targets Agility, the sorcerer can cause the rope to bind the target, impeding its own physical actions by a -4 action penalty. When the spell's duration expires, the rope falls lifeless again, and anyone bound by it is freed.

Darkness

School: Spectramancy
Invocation: Instant
Range: Near missile
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Large room
Effect: Impeding
Difficulty/Cost: 17

By controlling the available light, a sorcerer can blanket an area up to a small room in pitch blackness. The darkness imposes a -4 action penalty on all actions that require sight such as combat or spellcasting.

Detect Magic

School: Divination
Invocation: 10 minutes
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Large room
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 10 (higher if resisted)

With this spell, a sorcerer can sense the presence of magical forces (sorcery or mysticism) used nearby. Magical items and enchanted individuals show a telltale glow of magical power to the user of this spell.

Feather Fall

School: Aeromancy
Invocation: Instant
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Individual
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 10

Made famous by the power of the Staff of the Magius carried by Raistlin and Palin Majere, this spell allows the caster to slow a fall and float gently to

the ground like a feather on a cushion of air.

Fireball

School: Pyromancy
Invocation: Instant
Range: Far missile
Duration: Instant
Area: Large group
Effect: +8 damage points
Difficulty/Cost: 17 (resisted)

This powerful spell summons a ball of fire that the sorcerer hurls at a target out to far missile range. The sphere explodes into a ball of fire that inflicts 8 damage points to a large group of targets. Because it is resisted by the highest Perception of the targets, the spell is both difficult and exhausting to cast.

Fly

School: Aeromancy
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 30 minutes
Area: Individual
Effect: Troublesome
Difficulty/Cost: 12

A sorcerer using this spell can fly through the air like a bird on a current of magical wind. The sorcerer flies at roughly the speed of a giant eagle, allowing him to fly up to four miles before the spell expires. If the spell expires while the sorcerer is still in the air, he falls.

Invisibility

School: Spectramancy
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 30 minutes
Area: Individual
Effect: Painful
Difficulty/Cost: 15

Using the illusions created by spectramancy, the sorcerer can make a target he touches invisible for the duration of the spell. The invisible subject gains a +4 action bonus to resist attacks requiring sight and can move through areas without being seen, although he can still be detected by sound or smell.

Levitate

School: Aeromancy
Invocation: 10 minutes
Range: Near missile
Duration: 15 minutes
Area: Individual
Effect: Variable (see below)
Difficulty/Cost: 10+

With this spell, the sorcerer magically lifts an object, moving it through the air without touching it. The final difficulty of the spell is based on the effective Strength that the sorcerer wishes the spell to have, using the effect table for damage and defense spells. For example, a Strength 6 spell would have a total difficulty of 13, while a Strength 15 spell would have a difficulty of 15.

Light

School: Spectramancy, pyromancy, enchantment
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Small room
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 13

With this spell, the sorcerer calls into existence a small point of light (known as "werelight" or "magelight") bright enough to illuminate a small room. Pyromancers achieve the same effect with a small floating flame, and enchanter may cause small objects to glow enough to provide the same light.

Phantom Steed

School: Summoning
Invocation: 20 minutes
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Individual
Effect: Hindering
Difficulty/Cost: 12 (resisted)

Using the art of summoning, the sorcerer conjures a spectral mount with all of the abilities of a normal riding horse (Co 9, Ph 10, In 2, Es 2, Dmg +2, Def -2) that will carry the caster or another individual chosen by the caster for the duration of the spell, allowing the target to travel up to eight miles on a good road before the spell expires.

Shield

School: Aeromancy
Invocation: Instant
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Individual
Effect: Def +9
Difficulty/Cost: 12

This spell creates an invisible barrier of air around the caster or another subject that protects him from attacks. The magical shield provides 9 defense points against physical attacks of all kinds but does not affect attacks using magic.

Teleport

School: Summoning
Invocation: 10 minutes
Range: Artillery
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 10

By folding space, the sorcerer can "jump" across a distance in an instant, moving from his starting point to another visible point within artillery range. Great distances can be covered in successive "jumps." Sorcerers have been working on ways to extend the range of this effect, given that some recall when they could cross hundreds of miles with a single spell. So far, the range of this spell remains limited.

Wall of Fire

School: Pyromancy
Invocation: Instant
Range: Near missile
Duration: 1 minute
Area: large room
Effect: +6 damage
Difficulty/Cost: 16

This powerful spell creates a wall of blazing flames ten feet high able to span the width of a large room. The flames cause 6 damage points to any character or hero that comes in contact with them.

Wizard Eye

School: Divination
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Artillery
Duration: 30 minutes
Area: Small room
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 16

This spell is based on one used by Fourth Age wizards; it allows the sorcerer to view distant areas as if he were physically present, seeing the area of up to one small room at a time. Unlike the spell it is named for, this version does not create an actual invisible eye and can see anywhere the sorcerer wishes within range of the spell.

New Sorcery Spells

Campfire

School: Pyromancy
Invocation: 30 minutes
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Individual

Charm of Protection from Sorcery

School: Enchantment
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour

Area: Individual
Effect: Def +10
Difficulty/Cost: 15

This enchantment is placed upon any item that can be worn or carried by the subject, typically a ring, amulet or shield. It creates a barrier of protection around the wearer that shields him from sorcerous attack, giving him 10 defense points against damage from sorcery spells or sorcerous effects from magical items.

Countermagic

School: Varies (see below)
Invocation: Instant



Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 6

This very basic spell allows the caster to start a small fire without the use of flint and tinder—useful for getting a campfire going in damp or difficult conditions. The fire burns normally once it has been set.



Range: Near missile
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Impeding
Difficulty/Cost: 15 (resisted)

Sorcerers are somewhat frustrated by their inability to interfere with the magic of their enemies. Once it was possible to dispel another's magic in a given area, but now a sorcerer must know something of the school of magic being used in order to counter its effects.

A sorcerer of a particular school can use his magic to counter the work of another sorcerer of the same school. Thus a pyromancer could attempt to snuff out an enemy sorcerer's fireball or wall of fire, and a spectramancer could banish an enemy's illusion. The counterspell is resisted by the target sorcerer's Perception. (It is also possible for a sorcerer to indirectly counter the effects of

a spell with another spell, such as a hydromancer creating a gush of water to put out a wall of fire, but this is considered a separate spell.) Countermagic has no other effect other than it interferes with the target spell.

Flaming Weapon

School: Pyromancy
Invocation: Instant
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 minute
Area: Individual
Effect: Dmg +8
Difficulty/Cost: 12

The sorcerer casts this spell on a melee weapon, causing the business end of it to burst into flames that inflict an additional 8 damage points to any target the weapon is used against. Wooden weapons are destroyed by the use of this spell when the duration

expires, and metal weapons become hot enough to inflict 1 point of damage each minute to a wielder if not handled with heavy gauntlets or gloves. The weapon will cool completely in 30 minutes once the spell has expired.

Gateway

School: Summoning
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Artillery
Duration: Instant
Area: Large group
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 15

With this spell, the sorcerer folds space enough for a group of up to ten people to be instantly transported a distance equal to artillery range. Multiple "jumps" allow considerable distance to be covered in a very short time, but this greatly taxes the caster. Unwilling subjects of the spell may resist, increasing the difficulty and cost.

Magical Missile

School: Varies (see below)
Invocation: Instant
Range: Near missile
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Dmg +6
Difficulty/Cost: 13 (resisted)

Once, the mages of Krynn were able to attack enemies with darts of pure magical force, but this "simple" ability is now beyond sorcery. Sorcerers must now use the powers of their different schools for combat magic. This spell is available to any school except for divination, enchantment, summoning, or transmutation. It creates and launches darts of the appropriate medium at the target. Pyromancers would create darts of flame, geomancers might use stone or crystal, and spectramancers would cast burning lances of light. The caster directs the missiles with an average Dexterity action, resisted by the target's Perception.

Water Bubble

School: Aeromancy
Invocation: 10 minutes
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Individual
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 11

Aeromancers have developed a spell that creates and maintains a bubble of air around a person's head, allowing him to breathe under water.

Mysticism Spells

Animate Dead

School: Necromancy
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Melee
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Small group
Effect: Painful
Difficulty/Cost: 18

This dark spell allows the mystic to animate up to five corpses within range, turning them into zombies or animated skeletons that fight at his command for the duration of the spell. The animated dead are mindless and can carry out only the most rudimentary commands issued by their summoner.

Blessing

School: Channeling
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 30 minutes
Area: Individual
Effect: +4 to ability
Difficulty/Cost: 14

With this spell, the mystic can add 4 points to one of the subjects Physical Abilities (Agility, Dexterity, Endurance, or Strength) for the duration of the spell. The ability may even exceed 10 through the effects of the spell, allowing the character or hero to perform amazing feats.

Charm

School: Mentalism
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Melee
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Individual
Effect: Impeding
Difficulty/Cost: 17

This challenging spell allows the mystic to convince a target that he is the mystics best friend and confidante—that everything he says is trustworthy and important. While few mystics trained by the Citadel of Light like the idea of tampering with the thoughts and feelings of others, they still prefer such methods to using their gifts to inflict permanent harm.

Cure Blindness or Deafness

School: Healing
Invocation: 20 minutes
Range: Personal
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Cures affliction (equivalent of 5 cards)
Difficulty/Cost: 10

This spell allows a mystic to restore lost sight or hearing to the subject with a simple laying on of hands and a short ritual. The subjects eyes and/or ears must still be intact for the spell to work, but it will cure afflictions such as cataracts and magical curses that cause blindness or deafness.

Cure Disease

School: Healing
Invocation: 20 minutes
Range: Personal
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Varies (see below)
Difficulty/Cost: 6

A mystic can use this spell to help the body throw off the effects of disease. The final difficulty of the spell is based on the strength of the disease being affected, ranging from 6 for a simple cold to 11 or more for magical diseases and ailments. The healer will not necessarily know the strength of the disease

unless he has encountered its symptoms before, so it is often necessary to overspend on spell points to ensure that the ailment is overcome.

Detect Evil

School: Sensitivity
Invocation: Instant
Range: Melee
Duration: Instant
Area: Small group
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 12 (resisted)

This spell allows the mystic to sense evil thoughts or intentions in any small group of people. The mystic must be able to see the faces of the people in question; thus, the spell would not sense the presence of an invisible adversary with evil intentions.

The spell does not provide exact information on the nature of the evil, only that it is present and which people are radiating it.



Feign Death

School: Necromancy
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Individual
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 12

Feign death allows the mystic to place himself or a willing subject into a state of deep trance in which all of the subjects body's functions are slowed to a standstill. The subject appears dead, and a daunting Perception action is required to determine otherwise.

While the feign death spell is in effect, the subjects need for food, water, and air is suspended.

Hold Person

School: Mentalism
Invocation: Instant
Range: Near missile
Duration: 15 minutes
Area: Individual
Effect: Impeding
Difficulty/Cost: 16 (resisted)

With a simple wave of a hand or a hard stare, the mentalist overwhelms the targets mind and renders the victim totally unable to move for the duration of the spell. A challenging Presence action allows the paralyzed character to overcome the spell and move again.

Insect Plague

School: Animism
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Near missile
Duration: 15 minutes
Area: Small group
Effect: Hindering
Difficulty/Cost: 16 (resisted)

The clerics of Majere were once well known for calling upon swarms of insects to fight their enemies, and some mystics have followed their example with this spell which summons forth a cloud of biting and stinging flying insects to harass and harry opponents. Anyone within the cloud of insects suffers a -3 action penalty to all actions for the duration of the spell.

Invisibility to Animals

School: Animism
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 15 minutes
Area: Individual

Effect: Invisibility
Difficulty/Cost: 10

This spell renders the subject invisible to any creature affected by the animism sphere.

Animals and other creatures will not see the subject of the spell, nor will they scent him or hear his movements. The subject of the spell gains a +4 action bonus against any creature affected by the spell. This is a very useful spell for hunters.

Polymorph

School: Alteration
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Individual
Effect: Troublesome
Difficulty/Cost: 13

This is a basic spell that allows the mystic to alter his shape or that of another willing subject he touches. The subjects Physical abilities can be shuffled as described on page 85 of *The Book of the Fifth Age*. For each point that the new form's total Physical abilities exceeds the subjects original form, the spell's difficulty increases by 1.

Remove Paralysis

School: Healing
Invocation: Instant
Range: Personal
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: Removes paralysis (equal to two cards)
Difficulty/Cost: 10

With a simple touch, the mystic can remove the effects of any paralysis on the subject, allowing him to move freely again. This affects paralysis caused by mysticism spells as well as by creature special abilities such as the touch of ghouls.

Sleep

School: Mentalism
Invocation: Instant
Range: Near missile
Duration: 30 minutes
Area: Small group
Effect: Impeding
Difficulty/Cost: 19 (resisted)

With a wave of a hand, the mystic can cause a small group of people in range to fall into a deep sleep for the next 30 minutes. Only the highest Perception in a group of characters resists the spell;

heroes resist individually. The subjects can be awakened by any especially loud noise or an attack of any kind but will otherwise remain asleep for the duration of the spell. This is a preferred means for more peaceable mystics to deal with hostile opponents without actually harming them.

Speak with the Dead

School: Spiritualism
Invocation: 20 minutes
Range: Personal
Duration: 15 minutes
Area: Individual
Effect: Troublesome
Difficulty/Cost: 9 (resisted)

The mystic performs a ritual that calls up the spirit of someone who has died to ask it questions that the spirit is compelled to answer. The spirit resists the spell with its Presence ability. If the spell is successful, the spirit must appear and answer the mystic's questions for the duration, but there is no requirement that the spirit answer truthfully. Those who do tell the truth are prone to speaking in riddles.

Tongues

School: Mentalism
Invocation: 10 minutes
Range: Melee
Duration: 30 minutes
Area: Small group
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 13

The mystic allows the subjects of the spell to comprehend each other regardless of the languages that they speak. Especially obscure or difficult languages may increase the difficulty of the spell if the Narrator sees fit.

Wall of Thorns

School: Animism
Invocation: Instant
Range: Near missile
Duration: 15 minutes
Area: Large room
Effect: Hindering
Difficulty/Cost: 17

This spell causes a wall of thorny vines and bushes to grow out of the ground to block passage of an area equal to a large room. Hacking through the vines is a challenging Strength action and causes 4 damage points to any character or hero per attempt.

New Mysticism Spells

Healing

School: Healing
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: Instant
Area: Individual
Effect: varies
Difficulty/Cost: 8+ (see below)

This basic healing spell allows the mystic to restore health by touch. The basic difficulty is for restoring one card to an injured hero or 1 point of Endurance damage to an injured character. For each additional card or point of damage, increase the difficulty by 1.

Ignore Pain

School: Mentalism
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Individual
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 12

This spell does not actually heal damage but allows a hero to ignore the pain of his wounds and continue to function. The spell restores all of the hero's cards

lost due to damage for the duration, but when the spell ends, the hero immediately loses all of the cards gained back from the spell, starting with their highest card. If this will result in the hero having a negative number of cards, the hero lapses into a coma and will die in one minute if not immediately healed back to a hand of zero cards or more.

Resist Mysticism

School: Meditation
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 30 minutes
Area: Individual
Effect: +4 action bonus to resist mysticism
Difficulty/Cost: 13

With a light touch, the mystic bestows on the subject an aura of protection against mysticism spells. The subject gains a +4 action bonus on all Avoid Mysticism actions for the duration of the spell, including mysticism effects from magical items. A similar spell exists that provides +4 action bonus on all Avoid Sorcery actions.

Ward Off Beasts

School: Animism
Invocation: 1 minute
Range: Personal
Duration: 1 hour
Area: Small room
Effect: Irritating
Difficulty/Cost: 13

The mystic traces out a circle or the borders of a small room and casts this spell, preventing any beasts affected by the animism sphere from entering the area for the duration of the spell. If the animals are especially desperate (hungry, fearful, or driven by another spell or special ability), the caster must make an average Spirit or Presence action to keep them out.



Stephen Kenson is a freelance writer who has worked for several game companies, most notably in FASA's Earthdawn line.

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Mage Construction



Better Building Through Magic

by Michael Lambert

illustrated by Brad McDevitt

The construction of a medieval castle begins by choosing a location. A defensible position is essential, and rocky outcroppings or river forks are prized by architects. Laborers are hired, often as many as two or three thousand, first to dig a foundation, and, if the location permits, then to dig a moat or ditch around what will become the castle's central grounds. Stone is brought to the site, often laboriously transported from quarries miles away, to begin work on the outer walls and towers. Wooden scaffolding is used to build the towering outer walls, often ten to fifteen feet thick, requiring the skills of numerous free masons and rough masons.

A great gate in the outer wall leads to an inner courtyard, where many of the castle buildings are located. These include stables, a blacksmith shop, barracks, storehouses, a carpenter's shop and the manor home, usually containing a great hall. Most of these buildings are constructed of wood, and require skilled craftsmen to design and build. Finally, inside the courtyard is the central keep, the focus of the castle's defenses. The keep has its own walls and towers, constructed in the same time-consuming fashion as the outer walls. A second moat might enclose the keep, which has private apartments, store rooms and service rooms. All of these buildings and rooms take time to build. In rare cases, and under extreme duress, castles could be built rapidly, but most take years, even decades to complete. Building a stronghold, castle, or cathedral using medieval tools and techniques is typically a long and expensive process.

In fantasy worlds, there is a better way. Magic exists in these worlds, and where there is magic there is room for innovation. Why

spend months digging a foundation when spells can transmute rock into mud, or a wand can displace tons of dirt with a simple command? Flying and telekinesis make the use of scaffolding and winches obsolete, and spells that shape wood, rock or iron make the use of skilled craftsmen unnecessary. In sufficiently advanced cultures, spells can be developed specifically for construction purposes. These could include spells that create illusory castles to give builders a pattern to follow, spells that enhance the strength of workers, or spells that detect the presence of salvageable construction materials on other worlds or planes.

The use of magical abilities for the mundane goal of constructing buildings in an AD&D® campaign world would be based on a simple premise: time is money, and building homes, strongholds, or even towns the conventional way takes time. Therefore, an organization that can reduce the time necessary to build large structures stands to make an extraordinarily large amount of money. Rulers might need castles built quickly to withstand an interdimensional assault, a local guild might need their buildings protected from scrying attempts, or a local church might want their cathedral expanded to attract more worshippers. The number of situations where magical construction can be used effectively in a fantasy world is endless.

In fact, it's not too hard to imagine a group of mages forming a cartel to perform exactly these kinds of construction services. The pay would be good, business steady, and—best of all—there would be very little chance of ending up inside the stomach of a dragon or some other creature from the wild lands. Also, the types of individuals who would be able to afford



the services would most likely have power and influence in the world, two attributes that help any business venture. In fact, the nature of some worlds might even require the use of magic to design and build certain structures if geographical conditions do not allow for the use of traditional construction methods.

The presence of a mage construction company in a campaign world is dependent on two factors: the abundance of magical abilities and the presence of large population centers that would generate a steady source of business. On worlds where magic is scarce, the use of magic would be restricted to a few scattered practitioners who would not be very interested in using their arcane knowledge for material gain. In addition, a world with a low or scattered population wouldn't have the need to expend the energy required for using magic in building construction.

If the two factors are present, though, and the DM decides to add a magical construction company to the campaign, a little background on the methods and techniques that can be used is necessary.

With the variety of spells available to mages, time savings can be realized at all stages of construction—planning, building and post-construction. See the sidebar on the following page for a list of spells that have construction applications is given above, but for illustrative purposes, we turn to the opening description of the medieval castle.

When planning a castle or stronghold, medieval architects were constrained by the natural geography of the location they chose to work on. Not so the mage. While location is still important, mage builders have unprecedented abilities to alter the terrain they're working on. With *move earth*, *dig*, *disintegrate* and *vanish* spells, mages can create or level small hills, forming a foundation in a matter of hours rather than days. Rock can be turned to mud for easy removal, and water can be turned to dust or lowered. Mages can even *control weather* to improve working conditions or meet an important deadline. These benefits, and others, allow mage builders to save time by changing the location site to suit the needs of the construction.

But why start using magic after the location of the stronghold has been chosen? Mages can use magic before construction even begins to determine the best location to build. Using powerful spells such as *vision*, *foresight* or *limited*



Wizard Spell Appendix

First-Level Spells

Alarm (protection)
Enlarge (worker enhancement)
Feather fall (damage reduction)
Light (fire avoidance, night work)
Mending (repair)
Spider climb (worker enhancement)
Tenser's floating disc (logistics)

Second-Level Spells

Bind (repair)
Continual light (fire avoidance, night work, interior lighting)
Deeppockets (worker enhancement)
Levitate (logistics)
Magic mouth (protection)
Strength (worker enhancement)
Wizard lock (protection)

Third-Level Spells

Clairaudience/clairvoyance (oversee construction, search for raw materials)
Explosive runes (protection)
Fly (worker enhancement)
Haste (worker enhancement)
Item (logistics)
Monster summoning (all types) (specialized worker recruiting)
Tongues (oversee construction)
Water breathing (worker enhancement)

Fourth-Level Spells

Charm monster (specialized worker recruitment)
Dig (excavation)
Plant growth (landscaping)
Polymorph other (worker enhancement)
Polymorph self (worker enhancement)

Fifth-Level Spells

Avoidance (protection)
Conjure elemental (specialized worker recruitment)
Fabricate (item creation)
Stone shape (statuary/specialized construction)
Telekinesis (logistics)
Teleport (logistics)
Walls (all) (specialized construction)
Transmute rock to mud (excavation)

Sixth-Level Spells

Control weather (location enhancement)
Disintegrate (excavation/location enhancement/renovation)
Geas (specialized worker recruitment)
Lower water (location enhancement)
Move earth (excavation)
Stone to flesh (excavation)
Transmute water to dust (location enhancement)

Seventh-Level Spells

Limited wish (location enhancement)
Vanish (excavation/renovation)
Vision (divination)

Eighth-Level Spells

Glassteel (support/aesthetics)
Otiluke's telekinetic sphere (logistics)
Permanency (spell enhancement)
Polymorph any object (various tasks)
Symbol (all types) (protection)

Ninth-Level Spells

Foresight (divination)
Shape change (worker enhancement)
Wish (various tasks)

windows, special detection areas to identify and neutralize pesky invisible, ethereal or astral creatures, and *magic mouths* to alert defenders are just a few enhancements that mage construction could add to any stronghold. Mages could cast *gate* spells to summon reinforcements from the Outer Planes, or teleportation portals for a secure escape route. The price might be steep, but a security system needs to fail only one time to have a once-proud fortress reduced to ashes and rubble.

Of course, these magical construction techniques need not be limited to the building of castle or towns; they can be used to construct buildings that have no medieval counterparts. There's no rule that states a stronghold has to be a stone castle with a central keep, basic towers, a moat and drawbridge. The castle is a common sight in fantasy worlds, though, as it is one of the most enduring features of the medieval political landscape. However, the design and construction of fortifications in the Middle Ages was a unique approach to a set of political and military realities that may be completely different than those of a fantasy world. Medieval architects did not have to contend with rampaging dragons that could make a mockery of even the highest walls, invisible mages who could pass through walls unseen to lower the drawbridge for allies, or monsters that could burrow into the castle from deep underground. Taking these and numerous other fantasy specific factors into account, it's easy to see that magical construction techniques could lead to the building of structures never conceived before.

Naturally, a mage construction company is not something that PC mages are going to run to join. That's not its purpose in a campaign world. It's a support organization meant to add depth to a fantasy setting and offers characters options they might not normally have. It does this in a number of ways: by introducing the player's stronghold in a short amount of game time, by giving the players additional avenues of adventure, and by giving the DM creative freedom to design unique buildings, cities, and towns.

Strongholds, fortresses or other structures that players control are narrative forces in an AD&D campaign. Many adventures can be designed simply around their construction and upkeep. The players might need to complete several successful quests to finance the

wish, mages can obtain supernatural advice on the outcome of certain building decisions. Best of all, if a priest can be convinced to add his talents to the mix, spells like *augury*, *divination*, and *commune* could be used to ensure the right place is chosen for construction.

Once construction begins, the impact of magic is even more readily apparent. Walls, towers and support columns can be moved into place with *levitate*, *telekinesis*, *Tenser's floating disc*, or *Otiluke's telekinetic sphere*. Monsters, elementals and humanoids can be summoned or charmed to perform specialized tasks, and certain spells can be cast to enhance the ability of different workers. *Enlarge* enables workers to lift more, while *fly* allows them to work on walls or roofs that are hundreds of feet above

the ground. Imagine workers wearing deeppocket robes filled with tools and materials miniaturized by the *item* spell, spider-climbing a cathedral or castle to finish work on the roof or ceiling. There would be no need for scaffolding, raised platforms, or heavy winches; work on hard-to-reach places would be sped considerably.

Accidents would also be less of a worry to the mage builder. Fires could be avoided by using *light* and *continual light* spells. *Feather fall* spells could save workers from injury, and *mend* and *fabricate* spells could repair or replace tools. Major injuries that could cause a medieval craftsmen to miss months of work can be cured with a simple potion of *healing* or a *cure light wounds* spell.

Magical wards to protect doors and



construction of a stronghold, or they might have a mandate from a local lord to defend a certain piece of territory. Once established in a certain region, players might become involved in local politics or promote the growth of a new town. Of course, having a set place of operations will enable enemies to locate and attack them, perhaps forcing the PCs to travel abroad to remove threats to their castle or tower.

The use of a mage construction company can cut the time necessary to build a stronghold or other building by as much as 75 percent over conventional methods. This gives DMs the ability to introduce these structures as adventure catalysts before the campaign ends. At the same time, using magical methods to enhance construction efforts is extremely expensive and goes a long way in separating players from any excess treasure they've accumulated during their adventures. If they don't have excess treasure, they can either pay for mundane construction or plan adventures to acquire the appropriate funds.

Of course, PCs are not the only ones who can benefit from magically enhanced construction techniques. Both allies and enemies of the PCs might have access to mage construction companies. PCs

might return to a small outpost they raided only months earlier to find a well-defended castle in its place. A local giant tribe might spend some ill-gotten wealth to add magical defenses to their hill-top fortress, or an evil temple can be built nearly overnight in a region thought to be controlled by lawful forces.

The ability to use a mage construction company for adventure scenarios doesn't end with the actual construction of new buildings. There are many ways that its entire business operation can be used to send the PCs in different directions. The company might want to scout ruined cities or towns on other Prime Material worlds to salvage construction materials, or to research building styles. PCs might be asked to go along as protection or to partake in the research. A scenario could also be developed where the players are asked to infiltrate a new stronghold to find flaws in its magical defenses. The company might need exotic spell components and contract the players to retrieve them, or it may ask them to fix a problem that one of their structures has inadvertently created. However it's used, a magic construction company can add many new twists to any campaign.

Even if the PCs never interact directly

with the organization, the mage construction company can play a part in the overall campaign. By simply acknowledging the existence of a group of mages capable of using magic to build different types of structures, DMs remove many constraints of world development. Cities can be built underwater, in the air, or underground. Buildings can rise thousands of feet in the air or exist on different planes of existence at the same time. A base town can be created around a portal that opens to other worlds, or an elvish fortress can be fashioned from living trees. Without ever employing or working for a mage construction company, player characters can feel its influence in many aspects of a campaign world. Once you, the DM, decide that these types of construction techniques exist in the world, the campaign possibilities are endless.



When not creating new ways to add some spice to campaign worlds, Mike keeps busy teaching his martial arts students how to defend themselves. His wife keeps him in line by reminding him he is the third smartest person in the family, after her and their cat.

LEARN MORE ABOUT MAGIC

Continuing Education for Wizards

by Lachlan MacQuarrie

illustrated by Steve Schwartz

The baron's mage knelt to examine the withered plants. Behind her, her employer glared at the devastation surrounding them. These fields were green not two days ago, wizard. I know the cause is not natural—"

"—and, therefore, magical," muttered the mage under her breath.

"—and, therefore, magical. But who has done this?"

"A moment's study, my lord . . ."

There was a long silence as the mage carefully sifted through the dusty earth. Two bodyguards began a rhyming game, while others dismounted to spare their horses. Finally, the mage stood and held a leaf up for the baron to see. "Here, sire, observe the striations—" she took a quick look at the baron's darkening face, and cut to the chase. "—uh, as you suspected, a realm spell, and it bears the traces of our 'good friend' to the north. . ."

Even the beginning mage has spent many years of intense single-minded study of magic and its lore; its one of the reasons they have such limited combat skills. From the history of magic to the common types of material components, to the subtle difference between invocation and evocation—the mage has acquired a vast storehouse of arcane knowledge. Following behind are bards, sages who specialize in magical lore, and even children of the nobility who study magic as part of a well-rounded education.

But is it reasonable to assume that every wizard and sage has acquired exactly the same knowledge? Specialists are an obvious example of mages who neglect parts of their education to focus on other arts, but even generalist mages have specific areas of expertise—certain types of magic they find useful or interesting. But how to express these varying bits of knowledge in game terms?

This article replaces the spellcraft non-weapon proficiency (NWP) with several new NWPS for the Wizard non-weapon proficiency group, to allow characters to customize their magical knowledge. Like other NWPs, each costs one extra proficiency slot (or two extra character points) to characters who do not have full access to Wizard NWPs. In addition, some of these proficiencies have

prerequisites—other skills or NWPs that must be possessed beforehand. Players may use these NWPs to customize their mages, to play "failed mage" warriors, or to recall information when investigating magic (which, in the typical campaign world, happens often).

Proficiency Descriptions

High Magic. This proficiency gives the character a formal knowledge of the most powerful magics in the campaign world (a knowledge of realm magic, for example), including true dweomers and other tenth-level magic. Lesser-known and obscure bits of information will be "remembered" with a successful proficiency check. DMs may disallow this proficiency on a case-by-case basis (i.e., an Anuirean regent might know much about realm magic, but his commoner bodyguard will not).

Magecraft: This proficiency indicates a formal knowledge of basic magical theory, how spellcasting works, descriptions of common spells and magical items, and biographies of well-known wizards. On a successful proficiency check, the character also "remembers" obscure or lesser-known bits of information about magic and can identify a spell by observing its casting. The proficient character may also roll against half his proficiency (rounded down) to spot a magical construct or item. This last use of the Magecraft proficiency requires 2-12 rounds of careful examination.

Metaphysical Theory. Beyond a knowledge of the campaign world's magic, the character has studied the theory of how physical laws and magical laws interact and can predict how varying these laws will affect magic.

On a successful proficiency check, the character can predict how magic will work on another world or plane, given some basic facts about the plane. (Spellcasters traveling to another world or plane often use this proficiency to decide what spells or items to bring with them.)

While on another world or plane, the character may make a proficiency check against half his skill (rounded down) to compensate





for the effects of varying physical laws for one round. This use of the proficiency requires 1-10 rounds of intense thought and concentration. During this time, the character cannot cast spells or perform strenuous actions. For the one round following the period of concentration, the character may cast spells and use items as if he were still on his home world or plane. This "bending of the rules" is quite tiring, and the mage must save vs. death magic or lose one point of Constitution (or Constitution/ Health) for one full day.

School Theories. Over and above the basic familiarity that any mage or any character with the Magecraft NWP possesses, each of the following NWPs represents an intensive study of a particular type of magic. The character has formal knowledge of all common, uncommon, and rare spells or items from a particular school of magic and can make educated guesses about new spells (including "name" and unique spells) and items from that school.

Prerequisite: Magecraft.

Specialists may identify and study spells and magical items from their oppositional school(s) but suffer a -6 penalty to their proficiency checks; on the other hand, specialists enjoy a +3 bonus when studying or identifying spells and items from their own schools.

Benefits common to all school NWPs:

- ❖ Mages with a particular school proficiency gain a +5% bonus to learn or research a new spell from that school (in addition to the specialists existing bonus) and a +5% bonus to create a scroll, potion, or other magical item that harnesses magic from that school.

- ❖ Mages may make one proficiency check at the beginning of any research or construction attempt. Success means that the required time has been reduced by one week or that the mage has deduced the exact nature of any one exotic or unusual material, required.

- ❖ The character no longer needs to observe a spellcasting to identify the spell. Traces of energy, second-hand reports, or characteristic odors are often

all that is needed. The character may make a proficiency check with a -4 penalty to identify the most recently cast spell in a particular area. Of course, the spell must be from the appropriate school and must have been cast less than one day earlier.

- ❖ Non-spellcasters who have come this far in their studies gain an understanding of magic approaching that of a beginning mage. They have the ability to read (but not use) spellbooks and scrolls, provided the spells are of the appropriate school; a successful proficiency check is required. In addition, the non-spellcaster gains a +1 bonus to any saving throws against that particular school of magic.

Unique Benefits of Each School Theory:

Abjuration Theory. Understanding of magical avoidance, repelling, and warding. On a successful proficiency check, the character can spot an existing protection or glyph spell and attempt a second check to determine the exact type.

Table 1: Proficiency Slots

Proficiency	Slots	Relevant Ability/Modifier
High Magic	1	Intelligence -3
Magecraft	1	Intelligence -2
Metaphysical Theory	2	Wisdom -3
(School) Theory	2	Intelligence -2

Alteration Theory. Knowledge of how magic can change an existing object, creature, or condition. On a successful proficiency check, the character can spot a shape changed, polymorphed, or magically-altered creature, although he cannot determine the creature's true form. This proficiency check is rolled by the DM (secretly) when the character first encounters the creature or when the player declares that his character is concentrating on a specific creature or individual. Lycanthropes and "natural" shapeshifters (like doppelgangers) are not revealed.

Conjuration Theory. Knowledge of the calling of matter or creatures from another place. The character has a familiarity with the structure of the Outer and Inner Planes and can recognize a particular planar creature or artifact on a successful proficiency check. In addition, the character may make a proficiency check after 1-10 rounds of careful observation to tell if an animal is currently under the control of a summoner.

Divination Theory. Advanced study of magical detection techniques and knowledge-gathering. The character is always allowed a proficiency check against half his skill (rounded down) when targeted with any form of divination magic. Success means the character feels that "someone is watching him."

The character is also familiar with common forms of divination in the game world (astrology, cards, and so on). If these work in the campaign world, the character may perform one divination each week (treat as an *augury* spell).

Enchantment/Charm Theory. Knowledge of enchantments placed upon objects and creatures. On a successful proficiency check, the character gains information equal to the result of a bard's Legend Lore skill about a given magical item. In addition, the character may spot a magical *charm*, *geas*, or simi-

lar spell after carefully observing the affected creature for 1-10 rounds and making a successful proficiency check.

Illusion Theory. Study of illusions, phantasms, and shadow magic. The keen insights and knowledge of psychology required to understand illusion magic makes the character very sensitive to subtle nuances of behavior. On a successful check, the character can tell if he is being deliberately lied to (although the truth is not revealed).

Invocation/Evocation Theory. Study of the flashy and dramatic invocation/evocation spells. On a successful proficiency check, the character may perform a single evocation *cantrip*, such as a single puff of smoke, a spark hot enough to light dry paper, a light equal to that of a small candle, or other minor magical effect. Like any other *cantrip*, this spell cannot harm any but the smallest of creatures and cannot disrupt anyone's concentration. On a natural "20," the *cantrip* is miscast (e.g., gives a hotfoot to the king, sets fire to the drapes, etc.—DM's choice).

Necromantic Theory. The darkest of the studies, the study of life and death and how very thin the barrier between them can be. The student of necromantic lore may conduct research (as per magical item construction) into golem construction, is an expert embalmer, and gains a +1 bonus to all Healing checks. However, the character's knowledge of life and death bring an increasing detachment from society that can be sensed by others. The character suffers a -1 Reaction penalty for every four experience levels (rounded down).

New Traits & Disadvantages

Campaigns that use the optional character point system presented in *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* rulebook can include the following:

Untutored (Flaw, 4 bonus points/10 bonus points): The character learned

magic through intuition and native talent, not by the usual apprenticeship. As a Moderate disadvantage, the character may not begin play with any NWP's from the Wizard group. Furthermore, the character must pay the "non-mage" cost (one additional proficiency slot, or two additional CPs) to acquire any such proficiency during play. As a Severe disadvantage, the character may never have or acquire spellcraft or any Wizard non-weapon proficiency and suffers a -10% penalty to learn new spells. His chance to research spells from scratch, however, is unaffected.

Natural affinity (school) (Advantage, costing 4 points): The character has a "knack" for a particular school of magic (chosen at the time of generation). The character enjoys a +1 bonus to all NWP checks involving that type of magic, and a further +5% bonus to learn new spells of that school. In addition, the character may learn one more spell per level than his Intelligence score indicates (Table 4, *PHB*, or Table 8, *S&P*). Purchasing this advantage twice for one school has no cumulative effect.

Campaign Notes

Advanced study of magic is not just a matter of "+5% to learn a spell." The character has an encyclopedic knowledge of various types of magic that he encounters during play. Although these NWP's provide immediate benefits, their main purpose is to encourage a more thoughtful, investigative style of play. As a new source of clues, of tactical information, or simply as a way to impress NPCs, this knowledge has many role-playing applications—provided the character has an opportunity to use them. The DM must plan ahead and be ready when the PC asks what his "abjuration theory roll tells him about the mysterious writing on the locked door," or says "I'm going to impress the sage with my knowledge of magical metaphysics."



Lachlan MacQuarrie has recently completed his Master's degree in Abjuration with a minor in Metaphysical Theory.

Table 2: Proficiency Character Points

Proficiency	CPs	Initial Rating	Relevant Ability
High Magic	4	7	Intelligence/Knowledge, Wisdom/Willpower
Magecraft	3	7	Intelligence/Reason
Metaphysical Theory	5	6	Intelligence/Reason, Wisdom/Intuition
(School) Theory	5	7	Intelligence/Knowledge

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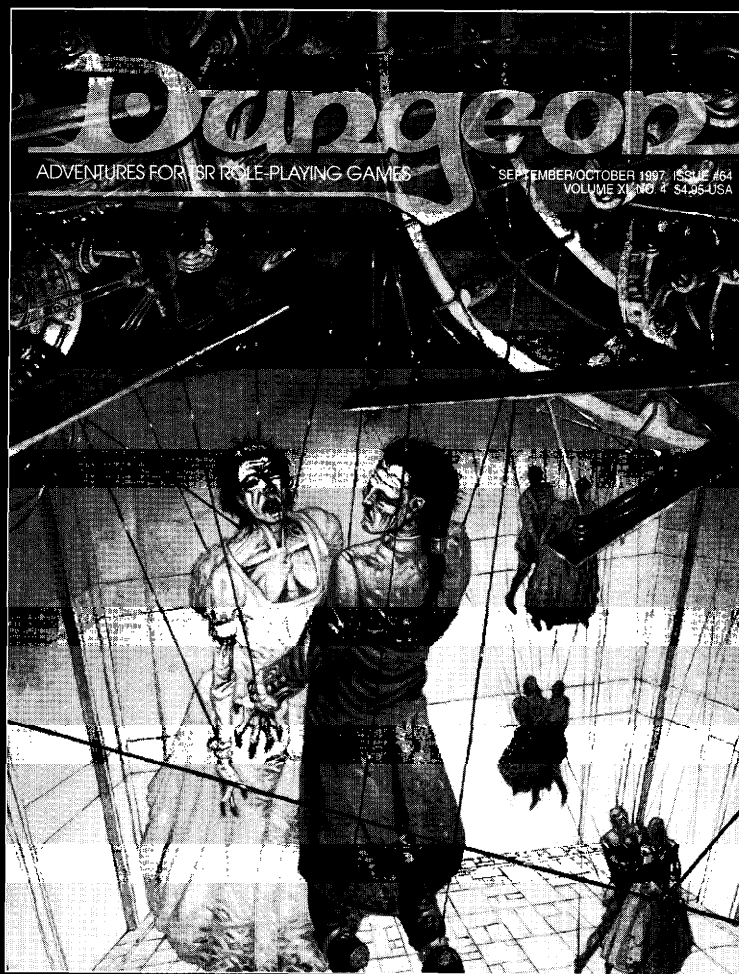
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Just the Wizards Three

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by David Day

It was early in the evening; it'd be hours yet before my study was invaded by three mighty mages.

Or so I'd thought. I was strolling unconcernedly down the hall, laden with a case of cola and some bottles of ice wine, when a sudden, well, hoofing sound from above made me look up, dump the drinkables onto the broadloom with a hasty crash, and dive into the nearest closet.

I was just in time. The closet has louvered doors, and I got myself turned around in time to see (through the slits) Elminster slide serenely down my banister rail, robes tucked up to reveal legs that were as hairy as they were shapely.

As he deftly swung his leg over to drop from one flight of stairs to the other, Elminster said loudly in my direction, "See? The place is empty, as I told thee. There's no one here to see us make fools of ourselves. Trust me."

By now, I can recognize a warning when the Old Mage gives it. For one thing, the words "Trust me" are a dead giveaway. For another, I'd never heard him hoot like that before. He prefers subtle, stealthy arrivals. I stayed where I was and kept very quiet.

A moment later, the lady mage Rautheene scudded down the well-polished banister in an elegant, precisely-balanced sidesaddle pose, gown demurely tucked around daintily-booted ankles. Behind her came her mentor, Mordenkainen, but I confess my eyes were so caught by the smooth descent of the lady in black that I scarcely noticed his voyage—or whatever befell Elminster at the bottom that caused a thump and a muffled curse.

The lady Rautheene has the merriest tinkling laughter I've ever heard. It rolled out across the hallway as Elminster rose, rubbed his behind, and gave her a sour look.

"Humph," he growled. "Some apprentices have more wits than to dare ridicule archmages who can shake realms with a single spell!"

"Or make an adroit landing," she agreed serenely, patting his cheek fondly as she danced down from the banister in an elegant swirl of black gown, unbound sable hair, and jet jewelry.

"Ho-bloody-ho," he replied darkly as she swept past, but there was a twinkle in his sharp old eyes as their gazes met. She grinned at him—and vanished in a puff of smoke.

At that moment, another solid thump announced the arrival of a certain mighty mage of Greyhawk at the polished post that stands where the banister turns at the landing, to plunge down the lower flight of stairs.

It was followed, after an ominous moment of silence, by a high, involuntary blurt of pain. Even from the closet I could see it was going to be a little while before Mordenkainen of Oerth found enough breath to emit anything more.

Elminster winced and hastily lifted a hand. His fingers made crawling motions like a bucket of aroused worms trying to elude a fishhook, and Mordenkainen rose gently into the air and floated down to the hallway.

A moment later, something seemed to grow and whirl between my eyes. I sat down hastily on a row of boots as blue mists raced and coiled across my sight. They grew bright, flashed together, then rolled back like stage curtains to reveal a scene that was bouncing slightly as we proceeded down the hall, with Mordenkainen's softly-hissed curses coming from nearby. My, but archmages know some interesting phrases.

I was back looking out of Elminster's belt buckle again, facing Rautheene as she leaned forward across the study table, a little frown of concentration on her face. Bowls of chips and glistening



dip were banking over her left shoulder on their way in from the kitchen (thank whatever gods there may be that I start getting everything ready early), and dark ranks of bottles were sliding softly along the polished tabletop.

Elminster surveyed the unfolding feast approvingly. "Good," he said. "Very good indeed. Ye found the smoked salmon, too." Curiosity crept into his approving tones then as he squinted and asked, "But what's that spread all over it?"

"Ice cream," Rautheene replied brightly. "I wanted to try the two tastes together."

Mordenkainen groaned, but perhaps its source was a twinge of renewed *pain* rather than a culinary opinion. He lowered himself gingerly into my recliner, snapped weary fingers, and watched the fire roar obediently into life.

"I'm dying," he told the rising blue-white flames promptly, his voice so plaintive that Rautheene dipped her face hastily into the ice cream and salmon to stifle a giggle. I saw her shoulders shaking as Elminster gave her a stern look and moved to take the armchair.

"Let us leave the table, this once," he proclaimed. "My lady?"

Rautheene hastily wiped ice cream from her chin and turned toward the sofa, licking long and elegant fingers as if she were just a child playing in the kitchen. Maybe she once had been.

"No word of Dalamar?" Elminster asked, settling himself. His pipe drifted to a spot just beside his chin, and emitted a contented puff of blue-green smoke.

"None," Rautheene replied, squeezing her master's shoulder as she passed, to bid him keep silent until he was more comfortable.

A row of bottles followed her, drifting along in midair. The lady apprentice sank down into the cushions, looked around for more pillows, then shrugged and swung her feet up to sprawl full-length. Grapes rained gently down into her mouth; she waved silent thanks to the Old Mage for sending them.

"I don't feel overmuch in the mood for talk of saving worlds and grave rising perils and spells that shatter towers asunder," Elminster announced. "Shall we keep to lighter converse?"

"Lord Elminster, I find that a delightful suggestion," Rautheene replied. She turned toward Mordenkainen. "Master?"

Mordenkainen nodded. "It strikes me well, too—and let me hear no smart

comments from either of you about things striking me."

"Such impudence would be misplaced," Elminster agreed solemnly. His pipe, however, gave a derisive snort, and I saw Rautheene put fingers to her lips hastily to stifle another giggle. Bottles and slabs of cheese were circling her master now, and in their midst he noticed neither—or chose not to notice either—reaction.

Pipesmoke undulated toward the fireplace as Elminster murmured, "Try dipping that extra old cheddar into mustard . . . a most intriguing taste, I find."

Rautheene shuddered. "And yet you disapprove of pralines'n'cream with smoked salmon?"

"Well," the Old Mage growled, "it sounds and looks revolting, but ye seem to be thriving. Send some my way, if ye will. I've survived this long, after all . . ."

As he spoke, a platter of buttered asparagus drifted to the fireside, flanked by bagels piled high with bacon, and mugs of steaming cream soup. My kitchen, it seemed, was suffering another full frontal assault.

"Well?" the Lady Rautheene asked, chin in hand, watching the archmage of Toril lick his lips.

Elminster turned incredulous eyes on her. "As vile as I thought it'd be," he growled. "I suppose ye like bubble gum, too?"

The lady apprentice frowned. What is 'bubble gum'?

"Rautheene," the Lord Mage of Greyhawk said formally, sitting bolt upright in the recliner, "I forbid you to investigate bubble gum. Absolutely and utterly. Think of it, if you must think of it at all, as chewing on a pink, oversweetened, sticky species of slimy raw eels."

His apprentice gagged delicately. "My curiosity endeth," she announced.

"Good," Mordenkainen said with finality. "To head off further mischief, I'd best begin our talk of magic—little spells this time, I think, matters of sleight-of-hand and empty flourishes that impress . . . and small, useful dweomers too, I suppose. Let us trade whimsies for once."

"A good idea," Elminster agreed. "Accordingly, I shall set forth the mysteries of *coinsharp*, *nextremity* and *Sortil's aqueous transfer*."

"Before entering studies under Lord Mordenkainen," Rautheene said, "my career tended toward . . . deception. I can contribute the spells *false ioun stone*, *hither*, and *wizard gong*."

Whilst I," Mordenkainen announced, "had occasion to employ spells concerned with both prying and stealth in my younger days. As we seem to be dealing in threes, let me reveal *echo*, *fingerblade*, and *spy*."

The three mages reached into their bodices in unison, drawing forth parchments with identical flourishes. It was a good thing that my snort of mirth was safely back in the closet, out of range of their hearing. "Spur-of-the-moment" and "unplanned," indeed.

Then, of course, they started trading tales of sorcerous goofs and hilarities—and the remoteness of the closet, echoing with my chuckles and helpless guffaws, became a very good thing.

If I ever dare to cross two old and wise archwizards, or a stunningly beautiful lady apprentice fast rising in power, perhaps I'll share some of those stories with you. Perhaps when I'm very old and my health is failing. By then, spending several centuries as a toad or a flowerpot or Rautheene's backscratcher might seem a little more appealing than it does now.

Things could get worse, after all. I could wind up as *Elminster's* backscratcher!



For Your Campaign

Remembering some of the tales next morning, Elminster chuckled all over again and gave me details of the spells exchanged by the Three in return for my promise to have at least four large tubs of ice cream waiting in my freezer for their next visit. Pralines'n'cream, of course.

"Oh," Elminster added gruffly, just before he faded into the fireplace, "and another thing: ye may as well fill a shelf of thy fridge with smoked salmon, too. Rauth isn't going to rest until she's got both of us hooked on her salmon and ice cream mess, too."

"She won't be able to get into that skintight gown much longer if she goes on wolfing down ice cream like that," I warned.

"She already can't, lad," Elminster replied in satisfaction. "Did ye not notice the gown she wore yestereve was a size larger than the one she wore at her last visit? I did."

The flames roared up past his smile, and he was gone.



Coinsharp

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Components: V, S, M

Range: Touch

Casting Time: 3

Duration: Special

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell turns a bladed weapon into a gleaming gold coin—or a gold coin into a sharp, pristine dagger (suited in size to the caster of the spell, with its appearance, hilt hue, and so on as envisioned by the caster). The transformation is complete and undetectable by normal means (though the changed item radiates an alteration *dweomer*), but the effect lasts for only one day per level of the caster, whereupon the item returns to its former shape. Only a mage of very clear wits and concentration (Intelligence 15 or higher) can use this spell to create a coin or dagger that is an exact duplicate of a pre-existing item, and then only if that item can be examined by the caster immediately prior to casting.

A blade or coin produced by a *coinsharp* spell that breaks or is melted isn't destroyed in the usual manner but instead returns to its true shape in pristine condition. (Continued exposure to whatever endangered its transformed shape can, of course, damage this true form.)

The material component of a *coinsharp* spell is a pinch of iron filings and at least one tiny fleck of gold dust—or a shaving from a gold coin.

False Ioun Stone

(Alteration, Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 1

Components: V, S, M

Range: Touch

Casting Time: 4

Duration: 1 round/level

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell animates and alters a stone or stones to make them outwardly perfect copies of the magical items known as *ioun stones*.

One to three false stones can be created by this spell; the only difference in casting is that more false stones require more material components. A raw stone takes on whatever forms of *ioun stone* the caster desires (so long as the caster has in the past actually seen a real stone of the sort desired). If not, the spell produces either a vibrant purple prism (even die roll) or a dusty rose prism (odd die

roll) as its first stone, and a pearly white spindle (even) or a lavender-and-green ellipsoid (odd) as its second stone, the third stone being any sort of *ioun stone*.

Like real *ioun stones*, the transformed stones spin continuously and take up an orbit around the caster's head. They can be grasped and repositioned (e.g., to orbit at a different radius) by the caster without ending the spell. Any stones touched by other beings vanish instantly but don't affect remaining stones. False *ioun stones* radiate a *dweomer* but have no actual magical powers. Their major use is to impress glibble onlookers.

The material components of this spell are the raw stones (which are consumed by the magic, vanishing when the spell expires), a small handful of small glass beads, and one clear gem of any type and value, per stone to be changed (such a gem may be flawed, but it must be real gemstone and larger than the raw stone it will affect).

Hither

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 1

Components: V

Range: 0

Casting Time: 2

Duration: Instantaneous

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell causes a single item to leap into the caster's grasp from elsewhere on his or her person. The item must be non-magical and of a weight and size that the caster could normally hold comfortably. It arrives gently but securely in a specified hand belonging to the caster, held ready for use, and may by means of this spell come from a scabbard, backpack, pouch, or hiding place under clothing without disturbing intervening garments or its former storage place (i.e., a backpack tied shut remains tied shut, and other items in it retain their places).

The transfer may be silent and unheralded, or accompanied by a faint flourish of chiming notes and a flash of light briefly trailing from the item, whichever the caster desires.

Wizard Gong

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 1

Components: V, S, M

Range: Unlimited (same plane)

Casting Time: 4

Duration: Special

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell causes the caster to feel a silent, distinctive vibratory alarm when a specific door, window, portal, or lid is opened or destroyed. The "alarmed" opening must be touched during casting, and the spell requires as its material component a clear, colorless gemstone of any sort, but not less than 1,000 gold pieces in value.

After a *wizard gong* is cast, the "alarmed" area radiates no *dweomer*, and casting a *dispel magic* upon it (or the caster) can't ruin the gong spell. Neither distance nor elapsed time has any effect on the operation of a *wizard gong*, but after it is cast, the caster loses the use of the first-level spell slot it occupies until it is discharged. An individual may have only one *wizard gong* active at a time. Once cast, the spell can't be ended by the will of the caster (unless he or she opens the "alarmed" door).

Echo

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 2

Components: V, S

Range: 0

Casting Time: 2

Duration: Special

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

An echo spell "records" all sounds heard by its caster in the round immediately preceding its casting. These sounds can be "replayed" aloud twice, at any time after the echo spell is cast, by the speaking of a single secret activation word chosen by the caster.

A caster can have multiple echo spells in use at the same time, but once one is cast, the caster loses the use of the second-level spell slot it occupies until both replays have occurred. The spell can't be ended without replays by act of will; the replays must occur to end the magic. Replays occur at the same volume level that they were heard by the caster, and they survive unconsciousness or intervening *charms* or *feeble-minded* states of the caster (but not the caster's death and subsequent resurrection).

This spell is normally used to incriminate loose-tongued conspirators, or to preserve important or complex instructions, proclamations, or agreements.

Fingerblade

(Evocation)

Level: 2

Components: V, S, M

Range: 0

Casting Time: 2

Duration: 1 round/level

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell brings into being an invisible, razor-sharp, weightless blade extending from one of the caster's fingers. A *fingerblade* can be willed out of existence by its caster at any time. It strikes as a +1 short sword, and the enchantment protects the wielder's hand from breakage due to impacts of the sword against opposing blades, walls, and the like.

The caster of a *fingerblade* can choose to destroy any one non-magical bladed weapon that the fingerblade touches (specific and successful attack roll required). There is no saving throw against this power of the spell; the touched weapon and the *fingerblade* both vanish, instantly and silently. This power can't affect magical weapons, or non-magical weapons bearing any sort of temporary dweomer (e.g., a normal sword upon which a *light* spell has been cast).

The material components of a *fingerblade* spell are a fingernail clipping (from the caster) and a needle or long, narrow, and sharp fragment of tempered metal.

Nextremity

(Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: 2

Components: V, S, M

Range: 0

Casting Time: 2

Duration: 2 rounds

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell "drinks" some of the caster's vitality, causing a loss of 1d4 hp (which can be regained by normal rest or magical healing). It causes one of the caster's hands and one of the caster's feet temporarily to switch places with each other.

The "switched" extremities retain full strength and skill; a caster can use a hand that is now down at his left ankle, for example, to reach for something or to perform a dextrous task just as if he were employing his hand (though visibility and guidance can be a problem; the spell doesn't move eyeballs about or provide "pipeline vision").

A *nextremity* spell has one valuable side-effect that makes this spell more than a juggler's (or sneak thief's) curiosity: as the two extremities switch places, any non-magical bindings or manacles upon them, or around the wrist and ankle to which they are attached, fall away.

Mages use this spell to manage "miraculous" escapes more often than for any other reason.

The material components of a *nextremity* spell are a piece of bone, a fragment of tendon, and a piece of sinew from any mammal (or mammals; they need not all be from the same creature or creature species).

Sortil's Aqueous Transfer

(Alteration)

Level: 2

Components: V, S, M

Range: 300 yards

Casting Time: 2

Duration: Instantaneous

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell transfers liquid from one vessel to another (either from a full container to an empty one, or trading the contents of two containers). For the spell to function, the two vessels (which can be open, like cups or mugs, or closed, like wineskins, casks, or stoppered jugs) must be identical (or nearly so) in size, shape, and material. The caster must have touched or handled both containers at some time previous to the casting of the transfer. The spell fails if this is not so, or if the caster attempts to move an ignited liquid, or a liquid containing solid or semi-solid objects larger than the caster's thumb (such as meatballs or dumplings).

If these conditions are fulfilled, the spell succeeds. No part of the liquid is consumed or lost by the magic; if liquid passes from a filled container to an empty one, the formerly laden container will be left bone dry. Movement of the liquid is silent and instantaneous; a sudden change in the weight of the container may result, causing an unsuspecting being holding or carrying it to drop the container or overbalance.

Alcoholic liquids and acids may be moved unaltered by means of this spell, but enchanted liquids of any sort (such as potions) lose their magic when affected by a transfer. Poisoned liquids are moved by a transfer, but on a roll of 1 or 2 on 1d6, they're rendered permanently inert during their journey; on a roll of 6, they're weakened so as to be delayed in taking effect for 1d4+1 rounds (in addition to any normal onset time delay).

The material components of a *Sortil's aqueous transfer* spell are a raindrop and a tear (from the caster), which are typically carried in stoppered vials fashioned to fit together when opened (the

opening of one large enough to engulf the open end of the other), so that the two drops can easily be shaken together; they must touch during casting.

Sortil was a mage of Halrua, who flourished some 600 years ago.

SPY

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 3

Components: V, S, M

Range: 0

Casting Time: 1 round

Duration: 7 rounds

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell brings into being a visible, tangible eye or ear identical to the spell-caster's real eyes or ears. The caster can see or hear through the organ as if it were his own, while within 90 feet of it (regardless of intervening walls or barriers). The eye or ear is stationary once placed in a spot by the caster and adheres to surfaces unbreakably (i.e., it can be "stuck" to the underside of a table to conceal it). If an eyeball is created, it swivels and focuses as if it were real, and the caster can direct it to "aim" in particular directions from afar.

If the eye or ear created by a spy spell is destroyed (it is considered AC 10 with 1 hp), its caster suffers an instant loss of 4 hp and the loss of use of one eye or ear (whichever is appropriate to the spell form employed) for 1 full day (24 hours, or 144 turns). Note that this blindness or deafness is a spell-curable magical affliction, not visible physical damage.

The material components of a spy spell are a glass rod or tube of any size (miniatures are usually employed), and a glass lens or cone, or an eyeball or ear from any creature.



Ed Greenwood wants it to be known that there is no truth to the malicious rumor that he is the son of King Azoun IV of Cormyr. Nor does his lineage have anything to do with irritable dragons, archliches, Harpers named Storm, lusty dwarves, Malaugrym, or wizards named Elminster. "All resemblances are purely coincidental," Ed insists. "I was in another world at the time."

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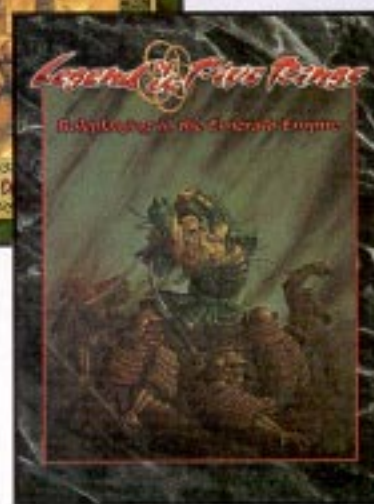
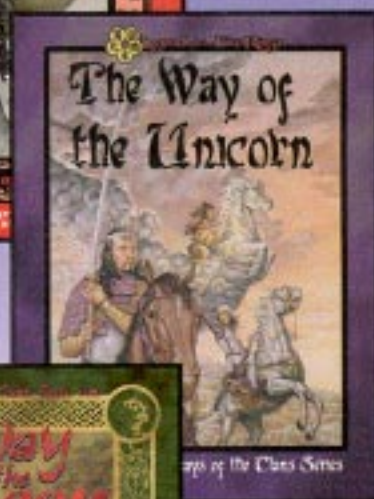
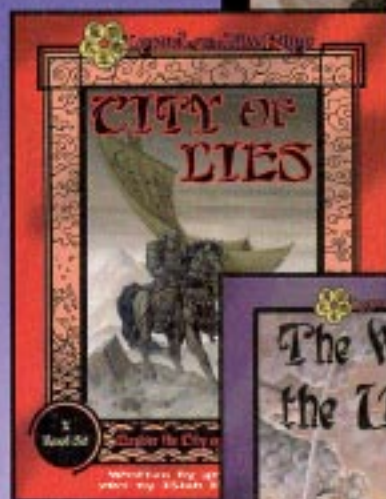
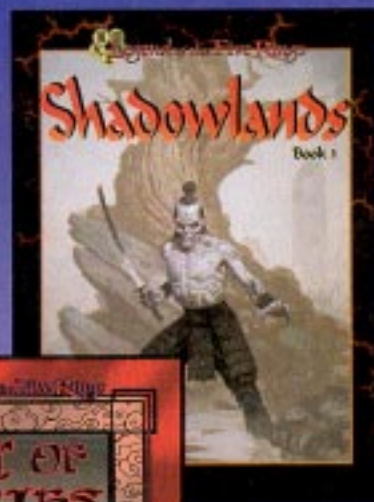
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The Dragon of the Statues

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

The investigations of Volo include some confused notes about a “desert-dwelling giant blue dragon who seems to have some magical link with a statue . . . way of surviving sandstorms? Special magic?”

Elminster has consented to lay bare rather more than such cryptic queries about the Doom of the Desert, lymrith, the blue dragon of the Chill Sands.

Few folk of the North ever see this legendary “Dragon of the Statues” unless they brave the frigid wastes of Anauroch east of ruined Ascore, or dare to explore the Netherese ruins scattered up and down the Fallen Lands along the western edge of the Great Desert. lymrith roams these regions tirelessly.

She’s engaged in an extended exploration of the surviving ruins of Netheril and has already gained much old magic from them. She has also developed quite a few unusual spells.

Perhaps the most important of these is the magic that has kept her alive thus far: *force burn*, a spell derived from magics left behind by Netherese mages that is deadly to the fey subterranean race known as the Phaerimm. Fear of it has driven them to ignore lymrith rather than turning their power to the task of destroying her.

Adventurers are warned that lymrith has developed spells that employ sand as a weapon—and that apparently confer the ability to use such magics on some of the many gargoyle servants she’s created.

lymrith is first heard of in adventurers’ journals written circa 570 D.R., as a young and aggressive dragon who smashed a Bedine trading encampment on the edge of the desert, who tore apart a caravan bound for the distant Sword Coast, and who left the camp laden with desert-gems.

lymrith apparently challenged an older dragon somewhere in the vicinity of the High Moor shortly after her emergence from Anauroch—and had to flee for her life.

Sorely wounded, she crashed into some ruins (possibly remnants of fallen Netheril) in the Forgotten Forest and hid for some years, healing slowly and stealing forth only by night to find food. At some point during this time of night-hunting, she somehow gained magic beyond the normal capabilities of even the oldest blue dragons; Elminster believes she was captured by a powerful archmage and modified by him to serve as an intelligent servant.

This belief is supported by sightings of a blue dragon flying over the Delimbiyr Vale with a disintegrating, robed human skeleton perched between her shoulders in a high-backed saddle. This was almost certainly lymrith, who soon began to

raid camped caravans and Sword Coast settlements by night, unleashing wizard spells from a roster strong and varied enough that many mages used magic—in vain—to hunt down a rogue wizard they believed to be dwelling in hiding somewhere in the Greypeak Mountains.

lymrith apparently turned to digging apart the ruins along the western Desertsedge when a chance landing to rest yielded her a stone chest packed full of spellbooks.

Her enthusiastic digging brought her jaw-to-jaw with her first phaerimm, and her life very nearly ended there, but the narrow escape alerted her to this mighty menace from below, and she redoubled her efforts to find magic, which she carried off to a windswept mountaintop.

Inevitably, lymrith was seen flying back and forth and was confronted by an adventuring band hoping to be rich dragonslayers by the end of the day. They ended up as corpses instead, and lymrith was goaded into experimenting with certain of the spells she'd already found to make her first gargoyles.

lymrith needed loyal, sturdy servants to guard her lair and dig for her while she kept watch for phaerimm and humans from a safe vantage point. Her gargoyles began as crude, ungainly gliding stone monsters but soon grew more elegant and deadly. Today she is served by such specialized creations as grandfather plaques (q.v., under "Gargoyle," in the *Monstrous Compendium® Annual Volume Three*).

When her gargoyle army was strong enough, lymrith set them to digging up Netherese ruins, while she spent hours flying high above the western desert and adjoining lands, seeking herds of rothé and the like for food and ruins that might not be visible from the air.

The shifting sands of Anauroch soon rewarded her, unveiling the leaning top of a lone sorcerer's tower. lymrith tore it open and found her richest magic yet. She made it her lair for some centuries, until one day phaerimm came boiling up out of its depths to slay her.

By then, lymrith was ready for them. Her *force burn* spells and other magics destroyed many phaerimm and sent the rest fleeing—and in the time she'd won by her victory, the Doom of the Desert set about shifting all of her accumulated treasure north to another ruin she'd found as the restless sands laid it bare: a stone city roamed only by the skeletons of undead Bedine.

The dragon has still not learned the city's name but has dwelt in it ever since, driving away all other dragons and phaerimm who approach, and making ever-stronger gargoyles to dig into the city's tombs and cellars for her, and guard what she has already gained.

The key to lymrith's character is her driving, all-consuming ambition. In the words of Elminster, she is "the least lazy and sleepy wyrm I have ever known."

lymrith's Lair

Though she has several caverns in the Greypeak and Sunset Mountains (caves that have their own pools of water but which she keeps otherwise bare), the Doom of the Deserts lair is the nameless ruined city that lies north-east of Ascore, half-buried in sand.

There she lies atop her hoard of gems in a huge temple or meeting-hall, with her tail filling the entrance to her smaller chamber of magic. All around her are gargoyle guardians, and her lesser gargoyle servants fly patrols to watch for intruders, tunnel the sand-choked chambers and passages beneath her, and tirelessly transport rocks from the nearby mountains to create a permanent "windbreak dune" or wall on the windward side of the city.

At least one adventuring band has reported being fired upon by "stone-hurling engines" (trebuchets) that were aimed and re-aimed with great accuracy by gargoyles seeking to dissuade any invasion of the city. These weapons could hurl showers of boulders almost a mile from the crumbling outer walls of the ancient city—reinforced by gargoyles swooping on the intruders from aloft, dropping boulders on them.

Teeter-totter pitfall traps and spell-hurling gargoyles were reported by the only mage to reach the city streets and survive. (He gained entry—and soon left hastily—by means of *teleport* spells.)

lymrith's Domain

From her nameless city, lymrith roams the western edge of Anauroch as far south as the Greycloak Hills and as far west as the eastern edge of the High Forest (now that Hellgate Keep is no longer the peril it once was). She seems to like colder climes, unlike most blue dragons, and flies occasional forays as far north as where the Ice Mountains meet the glaciers.

The Doom of the Desert regards her city—and the ways beneath it, as far down as they may exist—as her exclu-

sive territory. Any phaerimm, drow, human adventurers, or anyone else entering it becomes her food as swiftly as she can bring about such a fate. The rest of the area she flies over, however, she rules but lightly, watching events more than enforcing her will. She is known occasionally to make hunting flights (in search of herds of livestock, usually) that carry her far afield.

The Deeds of lymrith

The blue dragon of the Chill Sands has spells that readily thaw ice into drinkable water. There is ice in plenty beneath her city, and much more only a short flight away in all directions except south or due west. She seemingly eats anything, so long as there's lots of it, but she doesn't seem to grow hungry too often. She spends most days examining magical items brought to her by her gargoyle miners, and experimenting with the spells and items she already has to derive new and more powerful magics.

lymrith creates new servitor gargoyles every dozen days or so, but she is becoming increasingly obsessed with her own survival and has interrupted her usual augmentation of her gargoyle army to experiment with the creation of multiple bodies for herself. At present she can "jump" her essence from her real body to a mechanical body and to at least two statues, but she hasn't managed to yet craft a second living body.

The statues lymrith has created are as large as she is, and all six of them look like stiffly-posed blue dragons made of single smooth-finished blocks of stone. (She's actually fused rock together with *flowstone* spells to make them.) When she *teleports* them about, or links with them to cast spells through them (just as a human mage can make certain spells emanate from a *projected image*) or to move her sentient self-essence into them, the statues' pupilless eyes come alive with tiny flames.

lymrith's driving aim is to gain all the magic she can and thereby rise to supremacy over all other dragons, phaerimm, or anyone else who might challenge her. Then she can live forever, crafting ever-stronger magics. No one knows whether she'll ever feel secure enough to think of mating, dwelling elsewhere, or sharing her magic with beings not of her own creation.

Certain Bedine tribes worship lymrith—from a safe distance. They leave behind offerings of polished sapphires. Thus far, lymrith has suffered

them to live and even safely approach the city walls until they can see her central hall clearly. She's never rendered them the slightest aid, however, and might just be humoring them idly.

lymrith has mastered various magical means of teleporting groups of creatures and is known to use this method to capture herds of snow rothé and other edible beasts when her supply of food runs low. (The harsh climate and scant grazing provender causes this shortage to happen fairly often.)

The Doom of the Desert seems to find the crafting and enchanting of items tiresome, but tinkering with the casting of spells holds endless fascination for her and consumes most of her days. Perhaps once every eight days or so she momentarily tires of magical experimentation and indulges herself in *farscrying* Faerûn around her, to keep track of what's happening elsewhere. She does this in a whimsical manner rather than taking thorough or defensive care over it.

Less than a decade ago, lymrith's spells ensnared the Company of the Flame Spider. Named for the exotic dancer who sponsored them, this band of fumbling magelings and disaffected mercenaries was formed in Athkatla. After several unrewarding forays into the High Moor and the ruins of Illefarn, they undertook a commission from the Merchant League to explore the chill northern reaches of Anauroch, seeking a trade route east or at least a series of landmarks that travelers across the shifting sands could rely on.

A dozen Flame Spiders avoided Ascore (whose fell reputation has spread across the North) but set off to travel in a wide ring around it, taking note of any desert landmarks along the way. They soon caught sight of the city that held the Doom of the Desert—too late to avoid being in turn seen and trapped by her. lymrith placed no compulsions on the adventurers; she merely makes use of *mass teleport* spells to keep them inside a ring-shaped region of shifting sands around her city, plucking them unceremoniously back into it whenever they try to strike out into the desert or reach the city (which they've dubbed "the Towers Unattainable"). As long as they remain in this indefinite area of desert, lymrith allows them to wander and act freely. Her gargoyles surreptitiously plant food and items for them to find (even shovels, when the desert storms expose interesting Netherese

ruins) to keep them interested in their endless roamings. Whenever adventuring bands, Bedine, or other intruders dare to stray too close to her nameless city, lymrith uses the Flame Spiders for the purpose for which she entrapped them: as unwitting defenders of her privacy, whisking them into confrontation with the newcomers.

Most Bedine attack the suddenly-appearing Amnian warband on sight and fall prey to the spells the two Flame Spider mages can muster, but the Flame Spiders sometimes befriend intruders. *Mass teleport* spells and gargoyles prevent any invasion of the city on such occasions, but if no such activity is mounted, the Doom of the Desert uses her gargoyles to send out a feast, then employs spells to eavesdrop on any over-the-wine conversations, seeking to learn what the wider world knows of her as well as interesting news. lymrith seems to have adopted the Flame Spiders as pets, in somewhat the same manner as soldiers' develop a casual affection for stray dogs, to whom they toss camp leavings. She uses her spells to snatch the Amnians apart from each other whenever their arguments break into open violence.

Most of the magical experimentations mounted by the blue dragon of the Chill Sands involve altering incantations to change spell effects; after centuries of doing this, she can tinker with spells instinctively and has been known to cast a spell in battle, observe its effect, and alter an immediate second casting to achieve a different result. Magic excites her, but challenges and danger (apparently) leave her icily calm; she has self-control far beyond what most dragons can conceive, let alone achieve.

When not altering or combining spells, lymrith is usually attempting to infuse some part of an artificial draconic body with a magical property or power. The upper reaches of her central city chambers are crowded with floating sculpted stone body parts and more-or-less complete bodies. On several occasions spell experimentations that went awry have awakened these floating dragon fragments into wild eruptions of movement and magical power, slaughtering gargoyles and causing even lymrith to retreat and blast anything that comes too close. A lurking Red Wizard deliberately caused one such burst of chaos some years ago, when lymrith discovered him spying on her. He probably escaped her furious volley of spells,

but less swift-to-fee mages (including an ambitious Brotherhood of the Arcane apprentice and several Zhentarim) have paid the ultimate price for daring to peer into the lair of the Doom of the Desert.

Farscrying witnesses of at least two of these deaths have discerned a pattern to lymrithian spell-duels, or at least a favorite attack method: the blue dragon likes to employ an ice storm or other area-effect damaging spell that lasts for more than a round and, while a foe is defending against it, launch a spell to destroy any protective shield they might raise. This attack is followed immediately by a spell designed forcibly to change their shape—usually into something mute and immobile, such as a giant clam.

lymrithian defenses can best be described as lax. She ignores attacks unless they thrust immediate consequences at her, whereupon she tends to hurl mobs of gargoyles at them and—if she deems it necessary—a few devastating spells or combinations of spells, to defeat or disable the menace so that she can return her attentions to whatever she was doing when the danger arose. Foes (such as, on one recent and fatal occasion, an overconfident group of Sembian wizards-for-hire) who believe that such hasty reactions give them a weakness to readily exploit are correct, to a point—but such bold foes had best be able to do their exploiting very fast and very hard, or an aroused lymrith will begin to unleash the full defenses of her city at them. In earlier days, she evidently placed belligerent creatures, from remorhaz to adventurers, in some sort of magical stasis, then stored them in sealed chambers, safe from hungry creatures, scouring sand, and the ravages of time. She can awaken groups of them en masse as she teleports them into the presence of a foe—or to a position just above opponents, so as to bring them crashing down on the heads of such enemies.

The mage Tathlan of Neverwinter, now deceased, discovered lymrith early in his explorations with an ancient Netherese scrying stone and observed her often. His notes (from which much of what Elminster knows of the Doom of the Desert is derived; the Old Mage stresses that although it appears lymrith became aware of her observer, she took no action against him and did not cause his demise) indicate that, from time to time, doorways and spires in the nameless city changed by themselves. Although their alterations may have

been caused or triggered by the magical experiments of "lymrith, she was surprised by the changes on at least two occasions, and Tathtlan believes that some other force was, and is, awake and active in the city. Perhaps phaerimm are managing to slip some magic past the Doom of the Desert, or older resident enchantments or hidden beings are at work. These changes never seem to amount to a direct challenge to lymrith, and their cause and true nature remain mysterious.

Tathtlan was of the opinion that lymrith is growing more whimsical and carefree as she ages, more caught up in the exultation of wielding magic and increasingly less caring of the world around her and of her own safety. He compared her behavior to that of some ancient elves, yearning for a oneness with magic that, legends whisper, led some of them to seek other forms of existence—even, in some ironic cases, dragon-shape. Elminster believes that lymrith's attempts to transfer her sentience from draconic body to body may have already led her close to a transcendent state of existence as a disembodied, mistlike flying spirit. Although she is yet a long way from preferring such a state to her familiar and powerful draconic form, the Old Mage believes, an attack that destroyed her body might not slay her, but might instead drive her into a wraithlike continued existence. Accordingly, he watches the future of the Doom of the Desert with interest.

lymrith's Magic

From the ranks of the many spells wielded by the Doom of the Desert (who seems about the equivalent of a 20th-level mage in terms of how many spells she can memorize at once, though she's never without a score or so of magical items that she can trigger at will), here are the spells that adventurers are likely to taste if they encounter any of her gargoyles, and the spell that has kept her alive in the face of phaerimm attacks.

Flame Sands

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 4

Range: 30 yds.

Components: V

Duration: 6 rounds

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell enables its caster (who may be an automaton such as a gargoyle

affected by an *imbue with spell ability* enchantment) to vomit forth sand in a thin, forceful stream at the creature's usual THAC0 (one stream per round).

The sand is almost molten, and its heat bums living things for 2d4+2 hp damage per stream. Its impact automatically shatters all glass, ruins all reflective (mirrored) surfaces, and clings to (cloak the appearance of) all gemstones and other crystals, which must be carefully heated and scraped to restore them to their former condition. (Re-heated gems are usually altered in hue regardless of how much care is taken over their restoration.)

Flame sands that strike water send forth scalding jets of steam in all directions (to a distance of about 6 yards). Any creature struck by these steam-spouts suffers double the damage of a sand stream (4d4+4 hp damage).

Saving throws are allowed against both sand or steam strike, representing dodging or finding cover to lessen damage to half.

Force Burn

(Evocation, Necromancy)

Level: 9

Range: 30 yds. + 30 yds./level

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: Special

This spell unleashes a glowing cylindrical bolt about six feet in diameter and 12-20 feet long, that bursts forth from the caster to strike at a single foe, at THAC0 2. If it misses, it fades away at the limits of spell range and is wasted, though it may well strike an unintended target along the way.

A *force burn* bolt is a magic specifically crafted to harm phaerimm: such creatures aren't magic resistant to it and can't reflect it. Any phaerimm struck by a *force burn* suffers the following damage: its strike disintegrates flesh and tissue for 4d6 hp damage and forces four saving throws vs. spell on the phaerimm. For each save failed, the phaerimm forgets one (randomly-chosen) spell.

Against all non-phaerimm (including humans), a *force burn* strike eats away at the targets body for only 2d6 hp damage unless the target creature is flying, levitating, or operating in a form different than its normal one (not just cloaked by illusions, but physically different or augmented due to magic); in this latter case the *force burn* causes its

full 4d6 hp damage. Regardless of which damage it deals, a *force burn* strike forces non-phaerimm victims to make only two saving throws vs. spell (each one failed means a spell lost). It causes no harm to non-spell-using beings or to spellcasters who have no spells memorized (a human sorceress with one spell left who fails both saving throws against a *force burn* would lose that one spell but not suffer any additional damage because she lacked a second spell to lose).

A *force burn* spell has no effect on non-living things, but does harm undead just as it does living targets.

lymrith's Fate

The Doom of the Desert is unlikely to gain enough magic to feel secure, but if she can survive phaerimm attacks for another decade or so, she might master the ability to move at will from body to body; there are a few dracolich and mechanical monster bodies in Faerûn that she might be able to seize.

This power would probably ensure her survival from a concerted phaerimm or dragon attack—a good thing for her, because she would also almost certainly come to the attention of the Cult of the Dragon (as more than a dim legend of the North) and face well-organized attacks from multiple dracoliches acting in concert with other Cult forces. Elminster's money will, however, be on lymrith in any such confrontation—though he knows more than a few mages who'd like to watch.



Ed Greenwood (and his home) narrowly survived a recent visit from Elminster. He feels duty-bound to report that the Old Mages newest favorite drink is the Amaretto Float (pralines'n'cream ice cream scoops dumped into the famous almond liqueur), and that Storm Silverhand's favorite color is royal blue—and that her second favorite color is something she's decided to call "Ed's blush."

DAILY BUGLE

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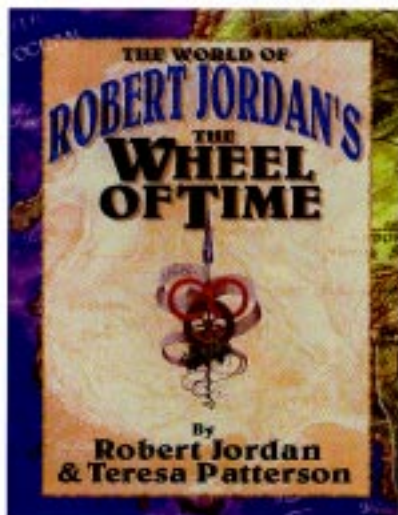
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The World of Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*

by Robert Jordan and Teresa Patterson
Tor \$39.95/HC

Any fan of fantasy literature who is not at least familiar with Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* series should be. Jordan's sales alone guarantee that he'll have a major impact on the genre. Fans will enjoy his latest release, *The World of Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time*, which describes the history and geography of his fantasy setting.

The oversized hardcover book is divided into six sections that vary greatly in their effectiveness. They are in order: "The Wheel and the Power," "The Age of Legends," "The World Since the Breaking," "Some Narrative Paintings," "The World of the Wheel," and "Within

the Land." Only the "Age of Legends" and the "World Since the Breaking" sections contain new information for those most likely to buy this book—the devoted Jordan fan. Happily, these two sections comprise more than half of the book and make it well worth the price.

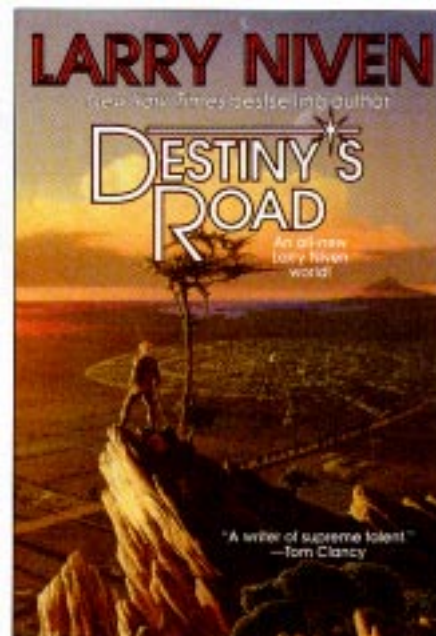
The clarified history of the world found in sections two and three are excellent. The descriptions of The Forsaken, the premier villains of the series, are also interesting. Finally, the book offers fans of this involved series a list of the thirteen major villains, a chronicle of the War of the Shadow, and detailed information on Artur Hawkwing.

The last two sections are, regrettably, nothing more than a brief rehash of what anyone who has read the books knows about the world. There are a few rare gems, like a continent that has yet to be mentioned in the series, and a closer look at the Seanchan. Neither of these two sections has enough detail to be useful to a fan, however; most of the material covered is clear from the books themselves. Additionally there should have been a brief list of all the minor characters and a description of where they are found in the books.

Anyone interested in gaming in the world of *The Wheel of Time* should have this book. Although it isn't a role-playing game book, it's an invaluable reference to the setting and characters.

It would have been too easy for Jordan to turn this out as a quick way to hold his fans' interest between novels and make some extra cash. Instead, the book adds enough detail to the history of the world to be well worth any Jordan fan's time. The novels are a better starting point for the series, but those already familiar with *The Wheel of Time* will enjoy this exploration of the world.

—JESSE DECKER



Destiny's Road

by Larry Niven
Tor

\$24.95/HC

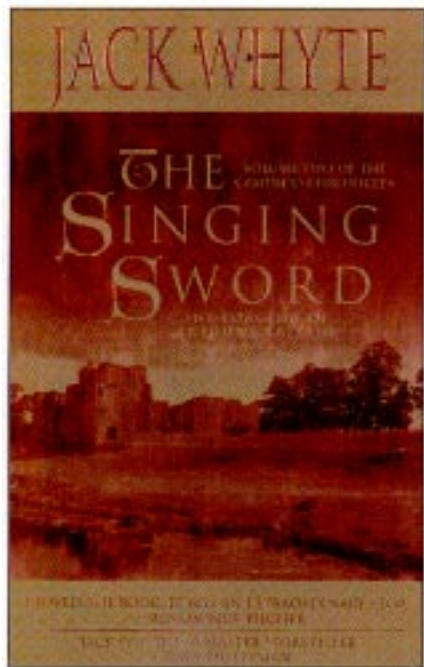
Larry Niven heads a short list of science-fiction writers who excel at creating new worlds. Of these, Ringworld is probably the best known. Now Niven gives us the planet called Destiny.

The Earth settlers of Spiral Town live at one end of *Destiny's Road*, a path of melted rock created by the Cavorite, one of two landers in which the colonists descended to the planet. The colonists struggle to maintain earthlife on their new planet. Cavorite helped, using its fusion drive to sterilize the "Crab," a peninsula jutting out from the mainland. With reduced competition from native life, earthlife has spread, providing sustenance. Even so, the colony is threatened by the lack of a necessary element that is available only in the form of "speckles," a food supplement sold only by the caravans, humans from another settlement.

Destiny's Road is part travelogue and part mystery, with adventure all along the way. Jemmy Boocher, a Spiral Town youth, gets into trouble and must leave the safe confines of home. He follows the "Road," determined to see its end. Along the way he encounters chugs, sharks, and the Otterfolk. The mysterious origin of speckles threatens his life.

As is often the case in Niven's novels, the world of *Destiny's Road* is so well-developed that the story seems too short. The pacing is good, however, and the journey of Jemmy Bloocher becomes an end in itself.

—PIERCE WATTERS



The Singing Sword

by Jack Whyte
Forge

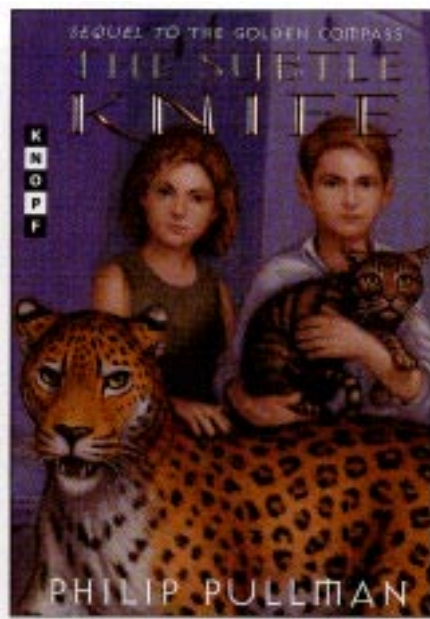
\$23.95/HC

Jack Whyte's version of Arthurian legend rises from a foundation in Roman history, with an emphasis on plausible science and military matters. You'll find no spellcasting wizards nor fire-breathing dragons in this distinctly masculine version of the rise of Camelot.

Publius Varro is the protagonist, and deciding whether he is Whyte's version of Merlin is one of the series' early pleasures. It's clear that Varro's friend Caius is the Arthurian Kay, and only in the second generation of the primary characters do we discover Uther, Arthur's sire. The story thus far concerns the evolution of Arthur's Britain rather than the famous characters of legend, and so the books are aptly called *The Camulod Chronicles*. If there is a protagonist other than Varro, it is the ideal of Camulod, a republican state rebelling against Imperial Rome.

Where *The Skystone* introduced a somewhat awkward sequence of sex scenes and polarized portrayals of women, *The Singing Sword* uses both of these elements to marry Roman history with British legend. Whyte's most successful achievements are his treatment of magic as science and his emphasis on action combined with military and political intrigue. The first two volumes promise a continually engaging and original addition to the canon of Arthurian variations.

—DAVE GROSS



The Subtle Knife

by Philip Pullman
Knopf

\$20.00/HC

The first volume of *His Dark Materials*, *The Golden Compass* introduced us to Lyra Silvertrough, the clever heroine of a subtly magical Victorian earth. In Lyra's world, all humans have magical animal companions, familiars. The familiars of children Lyra's age can change shape at will, but at puberty each familiar takes its permanent form. Lyra's adventures in the first novel reveal much about the nature of familiars and the world-shaking ambitions of her scientist father, Lord Asriel.

In *The Subtle Knife*, we meet Will Party, a boy from our own, modern Earth. As cunning and brave as Lyra, Will also must survive the dangers of his father's mysterious past. Together, Will and Lyra begin to discover how their separate quests are related—and how each leads ultimately to the most terrible of conflicts.

The most brilliant element of *The Subtle Knife* and its predecessor is the characterization of the children. These are not the innocent darlings of most fiction, but real characters, capable of both good and wicked acts. The moral choices of the protagonists are meaningful and compelling, and their quest becomes truly epic as the story unfolds.

While its virtues invite comparisons to Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, Philip Pullman has created a truly original work. No lover of fantasy fiction should miss these inevitable classics.

—DAVE GROSS

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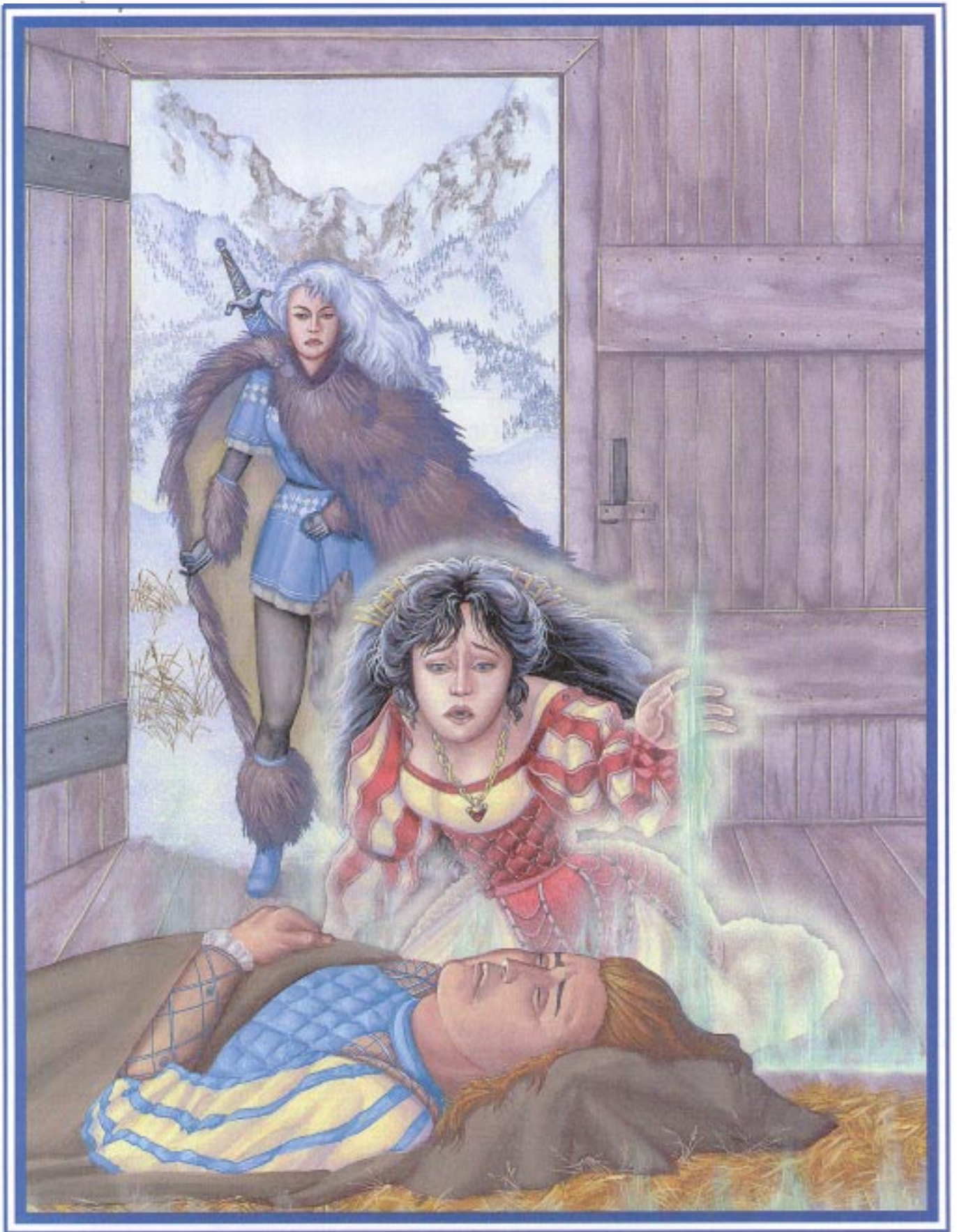
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In the Bleak Deepwinter

Lynn Abbey

Artwork by Susan Van Camp

A note from Holwof, archivist of Candlekeep, to his superior:

We've finished cataloging the third shelf! Mehgrin found this bound in a volume of Urmlaspyr poetry. She believes it to be an unrecorded tale of the Simbul. After reading it, I'm inclined to agree. Deneir alone knows who first wrote it, but no one other than Alassra Shentrantra swears by breakfast foods!



he air soured at midday. By early dusk, the blizzard had begun in earnest, hurling frigid claws against the walls of Caddo's charterhouse. The stout timbers held the worst at bay, but wisps of ice sparkled above all the candles.

Save for the blizzard's howl, Caddo's was a quiet place. None of the locals who came each evening to gossip was foolish enough to leave home on such a night, and the woodfolk who'd dribbled in during the bleak afternoon were a taciturn lot, given to staring at the hearth and nursing a single flagon until midnight. Burr, the dwarf who worked for Caddo, had little to do.

He'd spent the afternoon in the tiny room he called home, checking out the gear he'd been wearing that night, some two decades past, when he'd stumbled through another blizzard and across the charterhouse's threshold for the first time. Blizzards were rare enough here on the borderland between the Lonely Moor and the Forgotten Forest. Two winters, even three, might pass without a truly ferocious storm. But the blizzards would come, and when their winds were strongest, Burr would gird himself with the fine weapons and armor he kept in his room and hurl himself straight at the storm's fist.

It wasn't something Burr wanted to do. It was something he'd had to do since that first storm, when he hadn't known what waited in the snow. Years ago, he'd tried getting stone-drunk, but he'd gone out anyway, surviving only because Caddo had followed him. Since then Burr took better care of himself when the air soured, lest Caddo follow him again.

Caddo was a good man with a wife, three children, and a crippled mother-in-law all depending on him. Caddo had no need of the snow cave. Burr's need grew stronger with every howling wind. It burned behind his eyes.

"You stay here," he told Caddo, slamming a polished flagon on a shelf. His hands had begun to shake. He made a fist and shook it in the human's face. "I've got to; you don't. You understand that? You stay here, no matter what. You don't come looking for me, not tonight, not next week—not next month or next spring. If I don't come back, you let me *rot* out there. You understand?"

Caddo pulled away with the wooden expression of an honest man trapped into lying. "I understand."

They stared at each other, years of friendship and a score of blizzard nights between them.

"Swear it by your—" Burr began as the door sighed on its hinges.

A blast of frigid wind shook every flame in the room, extinguishing half the candles and two of the lamps. In the light that remained, Burr and Caddo took the newcomers measure. He was above middling height and wrapped in shaggy fur. The leather-wrapped hilt of a great sword stuck up above his right shoulder, and the shifting sound of chain-mail accented his slightest move. His hands were sheathed in bear-paw gauntlets; his leggings might have come from the same source.

A shroud of ice-rimed wool shielded his face. There was a slit for his eyes, but the shadows and cold were such that not even Burrs dwarven vision could guess their temper. They watched as the newcomer strode to the dry rack where the woodfolk had left their cloaks. Precious metal glinted as he opened the cloak-clasp. His hood fell back, dumping ice on the taproom's floor and releasing an unexpected wealth of silver hair.

Caddo shot another silent question Burrs way, and the dwarf answered with a puzzled shrug. Anything was possible here, where the ruins of Dekanter were only two days' journey to the northeast. The newcomer might be an elf or a half-elf or a man years past his prime. Burr was prepared for anything he thought, as the man unwound his woolen shroud, anything but a woman.

"Dear lady," Caddo began, ever the courteous innkeeper. "May I help?"

She nailed Caddo with a scowl, and suddenly the taproom was colder than the night outside. "Brandy. Warmed. Now."

Without the scowl, she might have been beautiful. Burr reckoned he'd visited a hundred cities before he wound up in the borderland and he'd never seen a demeanor quite as harsh. He nodded as Caddo closed his hand around a thumbnail-sized divination crystal. Holding the crystal between his eye and a glass-bottom flagon, Caddo scryed the woman's aura. Burr asked a silent question, and Caddo shrugged.

"Plain as you or me," Caddo whispered, retrieving a wax-covered bottle. He filled the flagon with amber brandy.

The dwarf wasn't reassured though he did his best to reassure the inn's other patrons as he carried the flagon across the room. As the woodfolk went back to nursing their drinks, Burr boosted himself onto the stool opposite the silver-haired scowl.

"Burr," he introduced himself, offering his hand after he'd set the flagon down. His fingers might have been serpents in her glare. He shoved his hand beneath the table and tried again. Will you be needing a bed-down, dear lady? There're rooms upstairs but, with the storm, folk are sleeping down here where its warm."

The woman held the flagon over the table lamp. Her fingers were blue-white from cold and unflinching in the flame. Silence lasted until Burr's fingers ached from imagined burns.

"No," was her answer.

"Got a horse for the stable?"

"No."

"Got a name?"

She raised her head. Burr wished he were somewhere else.

"Rekka," she said and drained the flagon in two long swallows.

Hardly a declaration of friendship, but enough for Burr to pursue the conversation. "I know what you've come for. I came for it, too, twenty-one winters ago. I didn't know enough then, but I do now. I know how to find it, how to fight what guards it, how to cross the last threshold. It's taken me twenty-one years, but I'm ready, Rekka, and I'll be your guide, right to the end. If you want the scrolls, that's no matter to me; same with the jewels and gold, but there's a box, a plain wooden box with no lock. I'll take that, and that alone, for my share."

The white pressure in his skull that was his need to be out in the storm brought tears to Burrs eyes. It would be easier if she'd hire him, but it wouldn't make any difference. The ghost was inside him, as it had been inside him since that first blizzard night. He'd do what he had to do, what the ghost wanted him to do: remove that box from Ffellsil's cave.

"I don't share," Rekka said in a tone that warned against further inquiries. She pushed the empty flagon across the table. "Another."

Burr did her bidding, like any tavern scut. "Ask me anything," he said when he returned. "Anything at all. Ffellsil's ghost? I've beat it ten times—but it comes back with the cave. The ice pit? I know how to get across. The cold fury? The dark mist? I knew the names when I came here but its all or nothing, dear lady, and precious little time before the cave sinks back into the storm. Take my advice, make me your guide, or you'll be sitting here when the next storm blows."



Rekka held the fresh flagon above the lamp, felt flame lick her fingers. There was no pain; she was a century past physical pain. She'd seen the human innkeeper peering through the glass-bottomed flagon and countered his crystal charm with a thought. She'd need her magic to defeat the snow cave's guardians, Ffellsil's ghost, the fury and the rest. The dwarf had his facts straight, but Rekka hadn't meant for anyone to see through her warrior's trappings just yet. The dwarf might have been lucky. Strangers couldn't be common here, especially not during a blizzard. With or without her magic blazing, she wasn't inconspicuous.

Sometimes Rekka did share the loot she harvested from out-of-time; out-of-place boltholes like Ffellsil's snow cave, but not with anyone who reeked of wrong the way Burr did. He'd been ghost-bit, perhaps, in one of Ffellsil's traps, or maybe he was just crazed. Any man might lose his mind up here where the air still stank of Netheril's sorcery, two millennia after that dark empire's collapse.

"I don't share. Do yourself a favor, leave me alone and—above all else—don't follow me." It was the longest

speech she'd made in a month and she took a sip of brandy to soothe her throat afterward.

He stayed in the chair, *leaning* the way plain folk did when they wanted something so much that it fairly burst their skulls. Rekka lowered the flagon, spun a brass ring on the second finger of her left hand. She could break him with the spells hammered into that ring, but he scraped the chair back from the table before she needed to use it.

The innkeeper, the dwarf, and the other strangers around her watched with sidelong glances and ill-disguised luck-signs, but they kept their distance as Rekka nursed her second flagon through the long evening. Around midnight, the innkeeper banked the fire. The lodgers bedded down in snoring heaps near the hearth. Burr extinguished all the lamps and candles save one, which was enough for Rekka to watch him leave the taproom and come back a little later with weapons and armor glinting beneath a cloak.

Yet he said nothing and stayed put when she clasped her own cloak. He was still sitting at a table, a shadow among shadows, when she put her hand on the door and left the charterhouse without a sound or draft to mark her passage.

If Burr had begun his search for Ffellsil's cave twenty-one winters ago, then he was a beginner in the questers' game. Rekka had first heard the Netherese wizard's name whispered in Yeenoghu's Realm more than a century ago. She hadn't been looking for Ffellsil then. She scarcely remembered what she had been looking for, except it must have been magic and she must have found it. Not that she needed more magic, then or now. All the magic Rekka needed was locked in her mind, hammered into the rings she wore, or etched onto the flexible steel plates lining her belt and baldric.

She was prepared for ghosts, even Ffellsil's ghost, and she hadn't tripped a trap by accident since the day she'd blundered through a time-weave and found herself, unharmed and un-aged, on the other side. It was a mixed blessing to know she couldn't age and might not ever die. Rekka hadn't known her family. She'd sworn off friendships because, even without questions or jealousy, there was still the pain of watching death steal them away.

The search for magic was her life. The artifacts and grimoires she kept in a cave beneath the Sea of Swords were simply the means to tally score in a solitary game. Perhaps she should have hired Burr, not because she needed a guide, but dwarves were a long-lived race and more sociable than ten elves together.

A blast of icy wind unfurled the hem of Rekka's cloak. She put a stop to her melancholy with an earnest curse and a frantic retying of the cloaks inside laces. At every step she took the storm's measure and, keeping firm hands on her cloaks hood and hem, strode into its worst. A thick, frozen glaze atop her shaggy cloak had made that task easier by the time she confronted the first warding. A single word she'd learned of the Plains of Fire

banished the black-ice mist. With one stride, Rekka entered a place colder than the blizzard yet eerily still and utterly dark.

She'd been warned that the cave would stifle any sound before it left her mouth. From here on, her spells were primed for thoughts or gesture. She made hand-fire with a gesture and a bit of yellow crystal, then set it afloat overhead, where its light could play no tricks with her vision.

Yet light alone wouldn't help against Ffellsil's ice pit, a bottomless crevasse that circled the inmost chamber and was sealed with a whisper-thin sheet of ice. One of the tomes she'd consulted in preparation for this journey advised the quester to carry a sack of not less than two-hundred fist-sized stones and, for an extra margin of safety, to sole his boots with iron rasps. Wise precautions, perhaps. Heavy precautions, certainly, and time consuming in a place where time was of the essence. Unless it was written on a scroll she hadn't found, Rekka knew of no spell that would let her remain in the snow cave once the blizzard's fury began to abate. It would simply melt away and return intact, as Burr had noted, with the next fierce storm. Rekka preferred simpler tactics: with a rings twist she rose a handspan above the thick ice or not-thick ice, whichever the case might be.

Ffellsil had conjured guardians as well as traps for his bolthole: sentient winds, hoarfrost beasts, a serpent formed from ice so hard it held a honed-steel edge. Rekka faced them all without surprise or ill-effect, dispatching the serpent with her great sword because, in her private reckoning, triumph by might was worth more than triumph by magic. But might took longer than magic and she was relieved when Ffellsil's final obstacle shimmered in front of her. It was, as predicted, a freezing ghost, possibly the wizard himself or his doppelganger.

Bright, diaphanous frost-veils unfurled around the ghost, seeking to draw Rekka into a fatal embrace. She floated, backward, staying just out-of-reach as she shaped her thoughts into the mnemonic trigger of a common frost spell—another bit of Yeenoghu gossip: Ffellsil's cave, like so many well-defended and wizardly places, was vulnerable to a simple, yet precise attack. A toothy grin spread across Rekka's face as the veils ceased their hungry shimmering. But the danger wasn't gone: The ghost was merely stunned. It would recover, if she let it—which she wouldn't. Rekka dug deep into the hem of her sleeve, withdrawing a handful of red, white, and black powder which she blew at the immobilized ghost.

More incendiary than sorcerous, the flakes had been dried from the hottest peppers known to mortals and immortals alike. Rekka shook with silent laughter as the stricken ghost sneezed itself into oblivion.

A chamber filled with treasure worthy of a dragon opened in front of Rekka. She paused before entering it. Burr had mentioned a final threshold that he alone knew how to cross. No one else spoke of a trap after the ghost, but a warning was a warning and she was glad to have had one a moment later when the faintest breeze riffled

her hair. She spun rightward, whipping the great sword through a swallow-cut. The blade bit into something she never saw, and a scream echoed in her mind without having touched her ears.

"I owe you one," she said to the absent dwarf. Hearing her own voice, Rekka judged she'd passed all the trials and dangers.

The wooden box without a lock, she decided, would be the proper debt-gift, if there were time to look for it. Searching the bolt-hole would be no small challenge: Ffellsil wasn't much of a housekeeper. Well, neither was Rekka. She attacked the clutter with the same reckless vigor she used in her own bolthole, hurling objects left and right, but not without examining them.

Rekka knew the blizzard had begun to wane when the bolthole sighed and the hand-fire above her head took on a greenish hue. The chamber appeared little different than it had when she'd entered, save for a heap of tomes and scrolls near the center. She still had a quarter of the floor and a whole wall left to glean. Curiosity or, to give it its true name, greed had gotten the better of Rekka early on in her magic-questing days, but she was wiser now and willing to settle for a smaller haul safely stashed in her own bolthole.

There'd be other winters, other storms.

Rekka took a thin leather sheet from her belt and shook it into a sack large enough to hold her swag. She was half-packed when she heard a noise at her back, where no noise could be ignored.

Clenching her fist and shaking her forearm in a single gesture, Rekka dropped a feathered dart into her palm. It was out of her hand and flying toward its target before her mind understood what her eyes saw. By itself, the dart was a puny weapon, but the drops of venom-wax behind its needle-sharp tip could kill in a heartbeat. The charterhouse dwarf was dead before he knew he was hurt.

"Your fault," Rekka said harshly, fighting the rage that guilt invariably roused within her. "Not mine."

He'd come for the wooden box without a lock. It fell from his spasmed fingers as he collapsed on the increasingly transparent floor of Ffellsil's bolthole. Rekka stared at it a moment, then scooped it into the sack along with the scrolls and other artifacts. She had the sack drawn shut and half-knotted when she noticed mist rising from the corpse.

The wrongness she observed in the charterhouse had a name now, and the name was geas. Another time, another place, and the spell might have captured her curiosity. In this time, this place, Rekka deflected it with a quick wave of her hand. It dissipated without a fight. That told her something about the spell the dwarf had fouled: The mage who'd cast it wasn't her peer.

As a result, she doubted the geas had come from Ffellsil. That mage's reputation, though dark, had been honestly earned. More likely someone else in the millennia since Netheril's demise had heard the tales of Ffellsil's snow cave and ensorcelled some misfortunate into

braving the its dangers. Rekka's curiosity ebbed as the geas had ebbed, and vanished with the snow cave.

Rekka was returned to the blizzard which had not, to her human senses, abated much. She reached into the storm, spoke a spell-laced word, and withdrew her traveling companion: a gnarled staff, faintly glowing in the wind-driven snow.

The staff held the location of every forlorn, forsaken place Rekka had ever visited and, most importantly, offered swift passage to her bolthole beneath the Sea of Swords. A few thoughts were all she needed: memories of rock and salt, thick fur carpets and a pot of tea steeping beside her favorite chair.

A lightning bolt struck the staff as it awakened: unusual, but not unprecedented, and no great cause for concern, considering the sack she carried and the cave she'd left. Still, Rekka took precautions as her bolthole formed around her. Hand-fire revealed nothing untoward . . . except, at the corner of awareness, a flickering mist.

Geasi weren't sentient in any ordinary sense, but some could flit from life to life until their purpose was accomplished. Rekka could have cast such a persistent spell, but it seemed odd that a mage whose geas could be deflected, once again with a simple gesture, could also have cast one strong enough to follow Rekka's staff between the snow cave and her own well-warded bolthole.

Still, the geas had vanished again and compared to what Rekka expected to glean from Ffellsil's hoard it was of minor interest. She plucked out the topmost tome and settled in her chair. A deep purple flame bloomed at the tip of one finger; she touched the cracked enamel of an otherwise unremarkable teapot. Steam rose instantly from its spout and the scent of Sambar herbs filled the cave.

Rekka lost herself in thaumaturgical theories which had been old when Netheril vanished beneath the Anauroch sands. An hour passed, an afternoon, an evening, a day.

"Fascinating," she murmured, closing the book. "All that from a tincture of arnica and willow-bark." Her mind raced toward applications, variations, and the cat-sized mist above the teapot. Flicking her wrist, she snarled, "Be gone!"

And, like a cat, the geas leapt for her shoulder, curling around her neck, caressing her ear. Rekka could almost hear its frustrated sigh: no geas, no matter how persistent, could wriggle uninvited into her warded thoughts. The geas sank to the floor and seemed the essence of misery and despair. Rekka could have, and probably should have, sundered it utterly, but that seemed unnecessary.

Besides, Rekka was hungry. A cookfire was unthinkable in the cave. Rekka plucked a handful of bright-colored pebbles from a bowl beside her chair and conjured morsels of cold, spiced meat. Chewing one and trying to decide if she'd conjured red meat or white or some improbably in-between mixture, Rekka plucked Ffellsil's wooden box from her sack.

A box with no lock, the dwarf had said truthfully. But Ffellsil's box didn't fall open in her lap. By its weight, she guessed it was hollow. By the many woods worked into it, she guessed it was a puzzle. Some twenty pieces sat on the carpet beside her before Rekka conceded that the box was empty.

She'd played a few unfair tricks with spells and artifacts over the years, but she judged Ffellsil an unnecessarily cruel mage. At least, she would never have crafted a geas that compelled unwitting men to their deaths in pursuit of empty boxes. Rekka dumped the wood chips in the bowl with the bright pebbles.

Movement against the carpet caught Rekka's eye. She thought immediately of the persistent geas and readied a spell to destroy it for good. The invoking words were on the tip of her tongue, the gestures at her fingertips, but the movement hadn't come from the geas.

Ffellsil's box hadn't been empty.

In slack-jawed astonishment, Rekka watched a man in the prime of life materialize on her carpet. If he'd meant her harm, he'd have been the first human in a hundred years with a fighting chance against her, but he lay as one asleep. Rekka took a moment to rally her defenses and another to marvel at his clothes, which were like none she'd ever seen. Considering the breadth of her travels, *that* was an accomplishment.

"Netheril?" Rekka muttered.

She'd seen images of Ffellsil and his peers, all of them created since Netheril's collapse, none of them accurate, none of them depicting a diamond-quilted tunic, wrapped breeches, or the square-toed boots so evident on her floor.

The strangers eyelids fluttered; Rekka paid closer attention to his face. It was a pleasant face, the sort of face Rekka had seen on countless ordinary folk whose thoughts and dreams lay beyond her comprehension. A tanar'ri lord rising from the Abyss could not have disturbed her more.

A tanar'ri lord would, at least, make no demands on her cave's precious air. Already the mote of her consciousness that kept the air breathable felt the strain of an extra pair of lungs. She had to get the stranger to one of her surface retreats, none of which she'd visited within the past year. Her best choice was deep in the aptly named Winterwood, where an outcast druid worked off a debt care-taking a hunters' lodge on her behalf.

Her staff took the lodge from her memory. It awakened with a shudder . . . and so did the stranger. His eyes were honey-colored when they opened and terror-stricken a heartbeat later. He began babbling in an unfamiliar language: Netherese. Possibilities exploded in Rekka's imagination: Spoken words triggered many spells, ancient and modern. The vocalized triggers of the Netherese magi had been lost along with their language . . . until this moment.

Rekka considered what she'd gain if she forced rapport and swallowed his language whole. Instead of

her staff, she reached for a crystal-tipped wand especially ensorcelled for rapport with another living mind. When the man saw it in her hand, he fell pale and silent. She imagined herself in his place, awakening from a millennial sleep brought on, perhaps, by a similar wand.

"Calm yourself," Rekka advised as she knelt beside him.

He didn't understand, of course, but he was too weak from his imprisonment or terror to resist when she traced the patterns of language across his face. Silent, he closed his eyes and fists so tightly that they trembled, but not from fear.

"Brave man," Rekka said before grasping his wrists and drawing him to his knees. "It will be over quickly, I promise."

A nimbus bloomed around his skull. Rekka stopped breathing and brought her forehead to rest against his. The next choice was hers: Breathe in and the language of Netheril was hers, but the stranger might be left mute. Breathe out, and the common tongue of Faerûn would permeate his thoughts, possibly erasing any other language he knew.

Breathe in or breathe out?

Rekka breathed out. The man chilled in her grasp, his body temperature plummeting. She held him fast, kept him alive, until her mind was as empty as her lungs. He was unconscious, and she was exhausted, but it was the exhaustion of success, not failure, and she reached for her staff.

It was a steel-gray noontime with fresh snow on the ground when the staff brought them to the Winterwood lodge. The druid was nowhere to be found and, judging by the debris on the floor and holes in the roof, he hadn't left recently. Rekka spared the time to send a suppurating curse after the druid before attacking the chaos.

If housework had been a magic art, Rekka would have become its master; but it wasn't, and neither was she. Her hearth-fire vented more smoke through the holes in the roof than through the chimney and the stranger, on whose behalf she wrestled blankets and straw into a bed, resisted when she settled him in it.

"I suppose you could do better?" she demanded, shaking the last dusty blanket over him.

He didn't need to answer. She'd studied his hands as she'd moved him. They were the scarred and callused hands of a man who'd worked hard, though he was too well fed and well dressed to be a peasant. He wasn't a wizard, either, and he was too old to be anyone's apprentice.

He roused Rekka's curiosity as no magic had in decades. She wanted to talk to him about Netheril and the days of sorcery run wild. She certainly didn't want anyone to harm him while she was hunting meat for the pot balanced oh-so-delicately on the hearth-irons, so she circled his bed with salt and camphor, raising wards that flickered as he breathed.

The Winterwood remembered Rekka. It gave her nothing she didn't earn, for that was the way of wild places. Yet she found tracks she wouldn't have seen if

the forest were against her. Two fat rabbits hung over her shoulder when the dreary afternoon gave way to wind-whipped twilight as she returned to the lodge.

Fire still glowed in the hearth—that was the lesser of the two astonishments greeting her. The greater astonishment, harder to see than the fire, was a translucent spirit hovering near the stranger's wards. The spirit had the shape of a young, human woman, dressed in garments not entirely unlike those the strange man wore, albeit of better quality. Rekka took note of ghostly gold hair pins in thick, dark hair.

A sorceress of Netheril? Ffellsil's rival? Rekka raised her right hand. Her forefinger curled, brushing the ring at the base of her thumb, invoking a spell that could sunder any spirit from its essence. But she left the spell uncast. The spirit seemed aware of nothing except the unconscious man, not even of the powerful wards that cast up a myriad of blue-green sparks when the spirit unwisely challenged them. It shrank back and to the extent that a spirit could reek emotion, Rekka felt its pain and desperate disappointment.

Those sensations, so similar to the reflected misery and despair Rekka had felt when the persistent geas had failed to penetrate her mind's warded thoughts, solved its mystery as well. The mage who'd crafted the geas had fueled it with her own spirit. The geas persisted because she persisted . . . Because the man imprisoned in an empty box had meant more to her than life?

By the laws of magic Rekka knew, and she knew a great many, such a transformation wasn't possible. Rekka couldn't do it, at any rate, and could scarcely bear the thought that a less experienced mage had accomplished the feat. Yet that conclusion, as the spirit was again confounded by Rekka's wards, was inescapable. The banishing spell on Rekka's fingertips fizzled in the heat of curiosity. She *had* to learn the geas-ghosts' secrets.

Dissipating magic penetrated the spirits' awareness. It turned toward the door where Rekka stood, dead rabbits in one hand. Its face became an eloquent mask of fear, erasing any doubt that the spirit retained its living personality: a true miracle of magic . . .

"Stay!" Rekka commanded, but the word was without power and the spirit vanished like snow-ice in the wind.

"Damn!" Rekka swore as she threw the rabbits across the room.

The rabbits struck the pot, knocking it off the hearth-irons, spilling hot water that raced toward the man sleeping within her wards.

"Twice damn and thrice damn," Rekka continued, adding an incautious wish to have the last moment back. Heavy air filled the room. The water slowed, then reversed itself. Belatedly Rekka realized what she was doing. "Cold tea and crumpets!" she shouted the curse to end other curses. The water flowed freely again and in the proper order of time, she diverted it with a broom.

There were eyes at Rekka's back. She came around to see her sleeping stranger sitting up within the wards,

alert and healthy. Rekka sheathed a knife and grounded a spell. At the rate, she was wasting magic, she was going to be up all night restoring her arsenal from her spell-books.

"Your name?" she demanded. She'd never been one for pleasantries. If he was awake, then it was time to start sharing whatever knowledge was left inside his skull. "Your particulars: who and what you were before I found you?"

"Irmenthelor. Second—" His voice stopped. He grew pale and swayed. "Irmenthelor—" he began again. "Second—" and stopped in the same place and clapped his hands over his ears.

Rapport, Rekka reminded herself. Names were names and stayed the same despite rapport, but all the other words changed. Irmenthelor was speaking a language he'd never learned and didn't believe he understood.

"So, your name's Irmenthelor?"

He lowered his hands and stared at them, every emotion known to man at play on his face. "Irmen. I am—I was called Irmen long ago, I think."

"If you were born in Netheril, Irmen—If you fell afoul of a wizard called Ffellsil, then it has been two at least millennia since last you saw the sun."

The swaying worsened. Irmen clutched his knees to control it. His eyes darted, the signs of a man racing through his memories and finding them turned to dust.

"Were you born in Netheril?" Rekka asked, as much to stop his frantic remembering as to have an answer. "Did you fall afoul of Ffellsil?"

"Ffellsil?" Irmen asked, giving the name a subtly changed inflection. "Why tell you what you already know?"

Rekka stifled her excitement. Irmen had mettle, the only quality she truly cherished in a man; more importantly, he remembered something of his former language. The spoken triggers of Netherese magic were hers for the gleaning! Full of nervous energy, she seized one of the rabbits and began skinning it with more vigor than skill.

"Why, Irmen? Because I'm all you've got, and you've got an idea what I can do if you refuse."

Irmen understood the message. "Yes, you could say I fell afoul of Ffellsil."

Rekka threw offal in the fire and wiped her bloody hand on her leg. "Stole from him?"

He took a moment to compose an answer. "He saw it that way."

"With reason?"

Another pause, longer than the first. Rekka looked up. Irmen's hands were clenched and he was staring at the fire. His voice, when he spoke, was a whisper:

"Is freedom still counted a crime?"

"By some," Rekka conceded, expecting a challenge: Her wards still sparkled around him. Even if he couldn't see them — *especially* if he couldn't see them—he'd feel them like the bars of a cage. But Irmen surprised her.

"I have given you my name. How shall I name you?"

"Rekka."

The half-skinned rabbit was slipperier than ten eels bound together. The knife slipped and sliced off its front leg. Grateful that it hadn't been a finger, Rekka tossed meat and bone into the fire.

"Well, *hasruth* Rekka, if you'll trust me with that knife, I'll see that there's enough meat left for us both to eat."

It was the sort of audacious remark she'd have made herself, were their positions reversed. Rekka set the mess between her knees. She admired audacity; she was beginning to admire this man. "And should I trust you with a knife?" she asked in a deceptively bantering tone.

"No, but trust hardly matters, does it, *hasruth*?"

He'd surprised her again with a wry and bitter grin framing his words. Rekka swallowed a smile of her own and quenched her wards. She stood up, leaving her knife and their meal behind on the floor. "Have at, Irmen. I'm not a fussy eater."

"Neither am I, *hasruth* Rekka—"

Irmen's legs buckled as he stood, spoiling his carefree display. Rekka could have offered him a hand but didn't. It wasn't her way; she didn't imagine that it was his. He caught his balance and took a tentative step.

"Not anymore. Not anymore, *hasruth*." There was defeat and despair in his voice.

Rekka realized, with some surprise, that she wanted more than words in a dead language from this man. She wanted another, less bitter, grin for a start, but had no notion how to procure it, one ordinary human to another.

"*Hasruth*?" she asked as he made two quick confident cuts with the knife. "Why call me that? What is *hasruth*?"

He finished skinning the rabbit, skewered it on the arrow she'd killed it with, and propped the laden arrow over the coals with his foot before answering: "Ffellsil was *hasruth*."

"Then I am simply Rekka who stole a wooden box from Ffellsil's cave."

Irmen tried to smile, Rekka saw the corners of his mouth twitch, but something she'd said rankled his memory. Maybe the box; she should have brought the pieces so he could burn his prison. Maybe something else. Whatever, Irmen sank into despair. She readied a spell that would freeze him where he sat, lest he do something foolish with the knife.

His mood brightened to the aroma of roasting meat, but bleak despair was never more than a breath away. In her undersea bolthole, Rekka had a grimoire filled with spells to keep a man smiling through any grief or torture. She considered retrieving it while Irmen slept—his energy flagged soon after they ate—but offered him her cloak beside the hearth instead.

"The embers will keep us warm," she suggested.

"Us?"

She tried to make a joke from his frown. "A man and woman together—you haven't forgotten, have you?"

"No, but I have a bed." He pointed at the straw and dusty blankets. "They'll be enough for me."

Irmen had surprised her again, and this time the surprise wasn't pleasant. "I'd, think you'd want company, after two millennia alone in a box."

"Time. I need time to forget . . . *everything*."

A woman with gold hair pins? A dark-haired woman who hadn't forgotten him?

"I'm sorry," Rekka said softly, words that might well have been Netherese for all the times she'd used them.

"It hardly matters, does it?" Irmen replied before he pulled the dusty blankets up around his ears.

Rekka had a time-honored way of dealing with anyone who shamed her: She found a reason to kill them before they spread the tale. Irmen, who fell asleep quickly and into the grip of muscle-wrenching nightmares, had no defense against her and, in the end, needed none. Rekka sat on the far side of the drafty, frigid room, wrapped in the cloak he wouldn't share. For the first time in a long time, her thoughts were focused not on sorcery, but on the even more arcane notion of affection.

She'd reached no conclusions before the hearth coals winked out. Her cheeks were so cold she thought her eyes would freeze shut each time she blinked. She was warming her face against her knees when she sensed a change in the room. By the time she'd got her head up, the geas-ghost was kneeling beside Irmen again.

There were no wards this time to repel its hands, but it was without the power to affect or experience the tangible world. At first Rekka was fascinated, but fascination faded, and the ghosts efforts became painful to watch.

"Desist," she suggested, not loudly enough to awaken Irmen, but laced with enough magic that the spirit would hear and, hearing, would fade as it had faded before.

When it had gone, Irmen cried out a single word:

"Sareh."

A name. Rekka could command the geas-ghost with its name, but she didn't, not that night. By the next day she feared it was too late. Though Irmen ate and drank when she did, he drew no strength from his food. By noon his skin matched the gray sky over Winterwood. He was withering . . . *dying*.

Rekka probed him with spellcraft, seeking a magical cause for his decline. She found only despair and denial. She probed him with questions, determined to learn all that she could of Netheril and its language before she lost him. She thought, too, as she interrogated him, that if he spoke of Sareh it might relieve his pain.

"Did you have a family? Someone you left behind when you challenged Ffellsil?" she asked.

"Challenged?" Irmen retorted, and a trace of the mettle Rekka admired returned to his eyes. But it faded. "No. No one," he whispered, turning away, staring into the fire. "I'd already lost everything."

Rekka was certain that he saw something in the flames. Someone. His grief was so quiet, so private that she, who feared nothing, dared not intrude, not even with a wish. His integrity had become more precious to her than his happiness. She was at a loss, a place she'd never been.

At sunset, she made tea with jasmine she'd brought from the sea-cave.

"Drink this," she urged, molding his limp fingers around the cup. "You need to rebuild your strength."

Irmen held the steaming cup but didn't drink. "For what? For more questions? Haven't I told you everything I know about the hasruth?"

"There is a world beyond Winterwood. A new world, without the hasruth. I can show you—"

His face became a mask that locked Rekka out of his thoughts more effectively than all the wards of wizardry.

"What?" she demanded, beginning to pace around the blankets where he sat. "What do you want from me? What must I do to make you smile and laugh? I've given you back your life, what more do you want?"

"I want what I had, hasruth Rekka. You have the power. Give me death—the true death—and then I will smile."

"But you're alive. You're free. Be grateful for that!"

"Grateful that everything is gone? Grateful that I'm the last and alone?"

"You have *me*!"

Irmen turned then and saw Rekka with her arm upraised in anger. She lowered it, but too late.

"Hasruth."

"I am *not* hasruth. Don't blame me for your failure. It's not my fault that she died!"

"She?" Irmen asked softly.

In the grip of rage, Rekka ignored the change in his tone. "Yes, *she* — Sareh, a dark-haired woman with gold hair pins. Ffellsil's daughter? His lover? Did you seduce her? Did you think you could steal her away?"

Irmen rose, unsteady, but without help. It was the bravery Rekka admired in him, but it wasn't enough to make her cautious.

"You're a common, ordinary man, Irmen. You had no chance against magic, Sareh's or Ffellsil's."

He stood quiet. Rekka thought she'd gotten some sense into his head. Then he began to speak.

"Common and ordinary, that's true enough—but I carried my lord's standard and covered his back in battle. I had honor. When we went to him he held our hands between his and gave us his blessing: me, his first-man, and Ynsarehal, his last daughter. We had honor, and more: We had love. But we had no chance, not against the *hasruth*."

Rekka learned as Irmen spat out the word *hasruth* how Ynsarehal might have managed to fuel her geas spell with her own life essence. Rekka's rage was extravagant, backed by centuries of sorcery and experience; it was powerful, but scarcely focused. Irmen's passion, common and ordinary, was so tightly constrained that, had he been any sort of mage, he'd have become a living fireball or lightning bolt. He—thank Mystra—had no talent, but Ynsarehal had.

It was a useful lesson, and one she'd put to good use in the future, but for now—

"I am *not* hasruth."

"You know her name! We died together. Hasruth Ffellsil had come, unannounced, as was his way. He called the household together. In Netheril, to have magic was to belong to the hasruth, and they were always looking. Everyone was examined, always, from my lord to the least. It was unpleasant, because *they* enjoyed it, but I had no fear; I'd been through it many times before. And Sareh, too. We were Netherin; it was our lives.

"Then the miserable bastard called her: 'Ynsarehal, you will come.' She had no talent, but that didn't matter, if the hasruth wanted her. She screamed and ran toward me. My lord could do nothing, not against the hasruth. We knew, all of us, what would happen if he tried. But for Sareh and I, the worst had happened—" Irmen paused, ironic, even in anger. "—Or so we thought. I caught her before he did. I remember fire as I held her in my arms.

"We *died* together. You brought me back. You know her name. Where is she, hasruth Rekka? What have you done with her, hasruth?"

Rekka opened her mouth. "I've—I've done noth—" but the denial could not squeeze past the memory of the geas-ghost fading.

"I'm not hasruth," a statement of faith, not fact, spoken as Rekka ran from the lodge.

Irmen's words followed her: "Hasruth! Hasruth! You have magic for your heart."

Three trees and one bear-sized rock suffered Rekka's wrath before she curbed it. The Winterwood swirled sharp ice in her face: Too much magic, too little cause: *hasruth!*

"I'm not!"

Her voice was lost in the wind. Rekka could challenge the storm, win a battle, and lose the war within. If she had not already lost it. She was human, born mortal, but she'd never grown old. Because she'd tripped through a time-weave? That's what she'd thought. Or was Irmen right?

Rekka began to shiver, cold and shame combined. She'd left her cloak behind, and though she could warm herself with a spell, magic wasn't an answer. She hunkered behind a fir tree and told herself she wasn't hasruth, that she had a heart until she knew, by the emptiness within, that she lied.

"I'm leaving. I'm going home!" she announced to anyone in earshot, but the sea-cave with its trove of heartless magic was not the place she wanted.

If not there, then where? The lodge? For Irmen? *With* Irmen?

Rekka summoned his memory. She was lonely, but lonely was different than alone. She wouldn't give up magic for anyone's company. For Ynsarehal? She did feel guilty and guilt was a terrible thing in the emptiness of her heart, but guilt always festered, with or without magic to fuel it. She wouldn't go anywhere for guilt.

For herself? Because she'd become accustomed to being alone and had never guessed anything was wrong or missing? Because the only magic left was the magic of the mortal heart she'd abandoned, and the only way to find it was through Irmen and his beloved?

She called the geas-ghost. Not surprisingly, she didn't come.

The pale sun had fallen below the treetops and the moon was already bright in a cloudless sky. Rekka's sleeves and breeches cracked when she stood. Clear nights were the coldest nights, not nights for being alone. She retraced her steps.

There were other tracks crossing hers at the threshold, leading away from the lodge.

"Damned fool!" she muttered and opened the door with a mighty crash. "I won't let either of you get away!"

Irmen taken her staff, which was useless to him, except as a crutch, and left her cloak, which might have kept him alive. Rekka furled the heavy pelt around her shoulders and set off at a run.

He hadn't gone far, just to a wind-scoured rock where he sat, staring at the moon. His eyes were closed and ice glazed, but there was a pulse in his wrists, a moan through his lips when he looked at her.

"Let me go . . . We died together. We'll be together."

"Fool! No matter who or what you worship, death's not like that. And, anyway, she's not exactly dead."

"She?" Irmen was stupid with cold.

"Sareh! Ynsarehal! Who else? Neither of you died. You were put in a box, and she," Rekka despaired of an explanation he would accept without despising her more than he already did. "It's all magic, Irmen, and you don't care about magic, do you? You talk in your sleep, Irmen, that's how I knew her name. But your Sareh had the knack for magic. She survived. She found out about Ffellsil's box, and she made sure she'd be waiting when her geas freed you."

Irmen began to shiver. He was fighting the cold, fighting death. Rekka wrapped him in her cloak and left her arms resting on his shoulders.

"W-w-where?"

"That's a problem. You can't see her; she can't touch you. And me, well, Irmen, you're going to have to trust that I do have a heart. I've made mistakes, but I'm not Ffellsil—Damn, it's cold! Let me get you back to the lodge—"

"N-n-no. If S-S-Sareh's here," Irmen glanced left and right. "Let me see her!"

"It's not that easy."

"Let me s-s-see her."

He struggled against the weight of her arms. Stiff as he was, Rekka feared she'd hurt him if they wrestled.

"I don't know who's going to get us warm again once this is over, but call her."

She waited as Irmen warred with his conscience before whispering, "Sareh . . ."

"With your *heart*."

Irmen sighed and, a moment later, Sareh's familiar shape flickered in the shadows, well beyond Rekka's reach. With one hand on Irmen's shoulder, Rekka beckoned the geas-ghost closer. Wide eyed and stubborn, she stayed where she was.

"Take my hand!" Rekka commanded.

"She's here? Where?"

"Tell her you trust me."

"It's a lie."

"Then make it the truth, or give it up. This cold *will* kill."

He closed his eyes and succumbed to shivering.

"Trust me, Irmen. I am not hasruth."

Sareh came closer, hesitated, extended a translucent hand. Rekka felt nothing until hard-won reflexes cut in, fighting the spell, protecting the magic-obsessed person Rekka wished to leave behind. For a moment, it seemed that reflex would triumph, then someone, possibly Rekka herself, said Trust me," and Sareh flowed into her, cold as the winter twilight.

Rekka retreated into herself, behind wardings meant to protect her memory from a tanar'i assault. Her appearance had begun to shift—her will, her magic, her gift that Irmen actually see the love he'd lost.

"Sareh. . ." his voice was awed.

An arm that was still Rekka's own moved toward Irmen's face. It would have been easy to burst out of her self-appointed prison, to destroy Ynsarehal while keeping her shape and a few of her memories. But Rekka didn't know what to do with those soft, delicate fingers, where to touch Irmen's cheek to make him smile.

Her voice said, "Irmen," and a torrent of other words she didn't understand.

The transformation was nearly complete. Another heartbeat, no more than two or three, and—will she or nil she—Rekka would be possessed for... for how long?

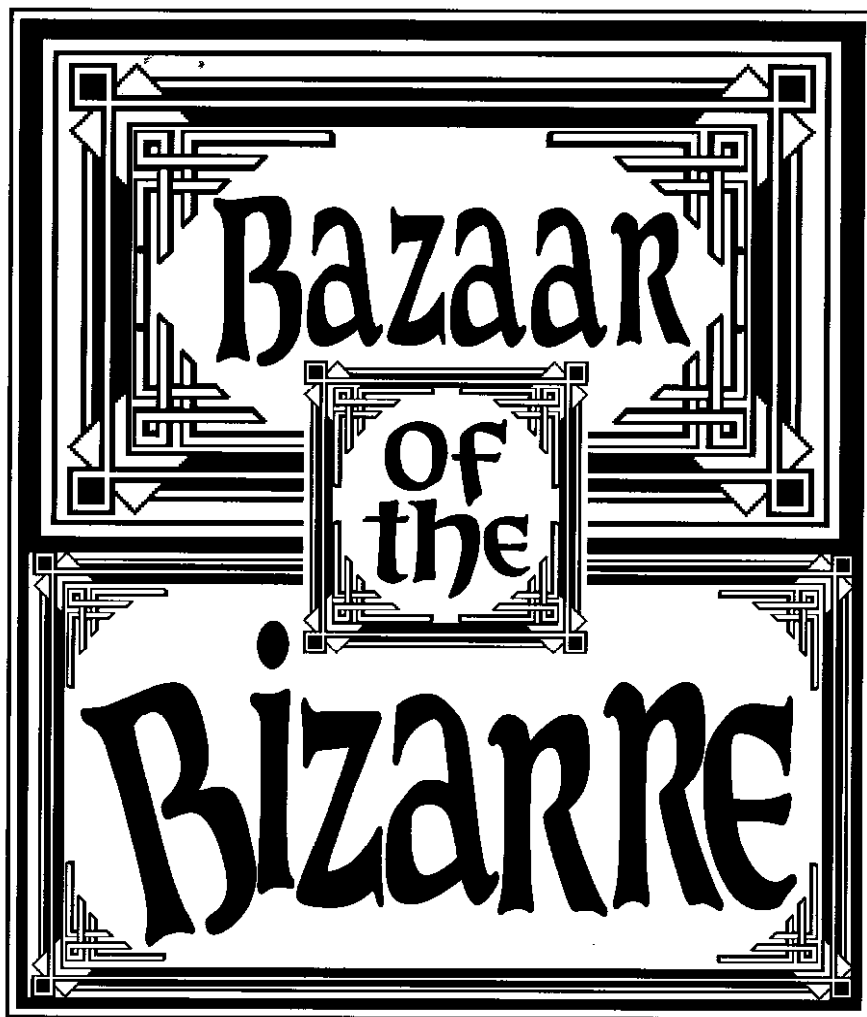
The question came too late. Rekka had surrendered everything except a shred of awareness that lips were pressed together, touching and being touched.

Would it be enough? Would it last?

Then the warmth of summer was within her, swaying in a gentle breeze, bursting with laughter. Rekka had her answer. Forever wouldn't be too long.



Lynn used to write for TSR's DARK SUN® milieu, then Elminster introduced her to Alassra Shentrantra. She promptly wrote The Simbul's Gift and this story, both about Alassra. She promises that it will be a lasting friendship.



Magical Allies of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Setting

by Bruce Schmidt

illustrated by Chris Adams

When the onyx panther figurine known as Guenhwyvar first leapt into the FORGOTTEN REALMS® SETTING in R.A. Salvatore's *The Crystal Shard*, it changed many players' perceptions of the various figurines of wondrous power and other sorts of magical allies. No longer were these enchanted creatures just an extra set of claws and fangs to be used in combat and then put away like a mere sword. Since Guenhwyvar, the magical ally has become a valued companion, able to think and act as far more than a living weapon.

The onyx panther is a unique being, however, belonging to itself and Drizzt Do'Urden. Neither is about to desert the other without stiff opposition. Where can a character find a companion to rival the incomparable Guenhwyvar?

Here then are four new magical allies from the farthest corners of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. Perhaps a player character might be fortunate enough to find one. Players beware: each companion is a legend in its own right and might have its own agenda and motives.

Harashuin's Spirit Ally

Harashuin's Spirit Ally is a minor protective magical item named after Harashuin of Alaghton in Turmish. The story of the *Ally's* creation is a tale of necessity. Harashuin was preparing to make a secret and dangerous journey to Arrabar on the southern coast of the Vilhon Reach. Unfortunately, he lacked both the money to hire guards and the personal spell ability to protect himself. Because the journey was too important to forsake, Harashuin desperately sought an alternative. After many experiments, the wizard crafted an amber pendant and infused it with every protective spell in his meager arsenal.

What spells Harashuin used are unknown, for the wizard did his work in secret. However, the pendant did possess one visible characteristic—the roaring visage of a lion was meticulously etched into the amber. Harashuin then went on his journey and arrived safely in Arrabar. The wizard boasted that the magical token had saved his life many times. Flush with his success, Harashuin created more tokens. To this day, many spirit allies have accompanied wizards, merchants, and adventurers of all types on their journeys throughout the Realms.

Description: Fashioned from a flawless gemstone of at least semi-precious value, and often displayed hanging from a chain, the *spirit ally* is engraved with an image of the spirit that dwells within. For example, a turquoise stone that contains the spirit of a horse would have a horse's head carved into it. *Harashuin's Spirit Allies* are infused with the spirit of any natural bird, mammal, reptile, fish, amphibian, or sometimes monsters such as pegasi, wyverns, displacer beasts, or hippocampi.

When worn or grasped, these magical companions can bestow the following benefits upon their owners.

1. The stone confers a heightened sense of smell, sight, hearing, or touch upon the owner. With these enhanced senses, the owner is surprised only on a 1 or better on 1d10.

2. As the stone is partially sentient, the wearer feels that he is never alone, even against terrible odds. The wearer's Morale never drops below Steady (11).

3. Encounters with a spirit ally's species (e.g., wolf stone = wolves) are generally friendly. Treat this effect as the rangers ability to befriend wild animals (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 3).

4. A wizard can use a *spirit ally* to find a specific familiar or minion. For example, if a mage uses a cat stone and the *find familiar* spell to locate a cat familiar, the attempt is 100% successful. With the spell's completion, the ally crumbles to dust, beyond repair.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 6,000

Quixoro's Knightly Steed

Sages report that this slightly tarnished medallion had been in the possession of the Chainse merchant family of Waterdeep since the time of Sir Quixoro Chainbreaker, a Tethyrian paladin who lived some 200 years ago. According to family legend, as long as the medallion remains in the hands of the Chainse, the family fortunes will continue to grow.

Unfortunately, Lord Neville Chainse, a vain and foolish scion of the family, lost the medallion last winter in a card game. The new owner, a sellsword named Wilfrid Hawkblade, left soon after and headed for Neverwinter. Neither Hawkblade nor the medallion arrived, however. Lord Neville is becoming desperate and has offered a substantial reward for the return of "his" medallion.

Description: *Quixoro's knightly steed* is a medallion the size of a large man's palm. It consists of an electrum disc, an iron ring and a gold chain. The disc bears the arms of Sir Quixoro Chainbreaker (a pair of falcons in flight separated by a diagonal chain broken in the center). The tarnished iron ring features a chain motif

broken at the four points of the compass. The crudely wrought length of gold chain allows the wearer to wear the medallion around his or her neck.

Upon examining this piece of jewelry closely, one notices three words (faith, loyalty, and courage) written in Old Tethyrian on the back of the iron ring. If

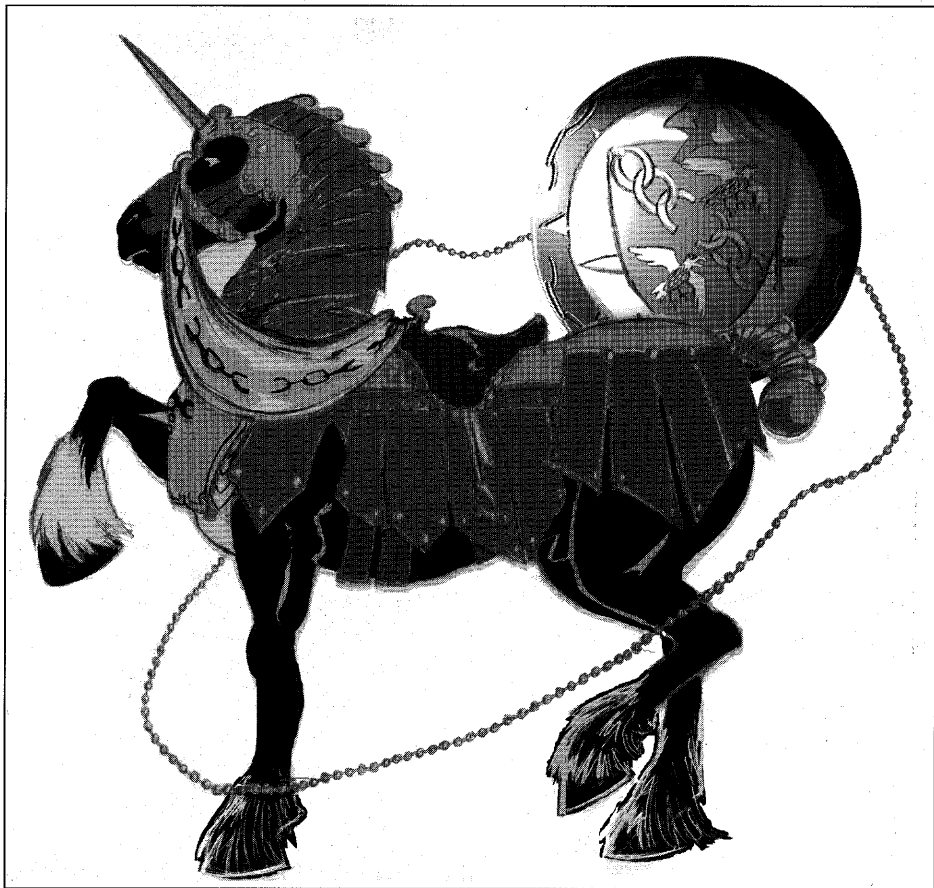
these words are spoken while the person wears the medallion, Quixoro's knightly steed, a paladin's destrier of heroic proportions, appears.

The Knightly Steed (heavy war horse): INT Avg; AL LG; AC 6; MV 15, HD 3+3 (27 hp); THAC0 16; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; MR 5%; ML 16).

Named Medallion, this stallion is rusty black with one white sock and blue eyes. His big (17½ hands) frame is clad in full leather barding with green and gold trappings and a chamfron with a foot-long iron spike.

Medallion can communicate with its master (and only its master) via a limited form of telepathy. He also has extensive knowledge (as a 4th-level sage) of the following subjects: Major—Chivalry, Strategy, and Tethyrian history (up to the point of Sir Quixoro's death); Minor—Heraldry and Etiquette.

When he communicates, Medallion's "speech" is highly formal and archaic (e.g., "Milord, I do perceive that thine enemies have secreted themselves behind yon shrubbery."). This battle charger has no sense of humor and possesses a blind spot when facing the enemy. (The word "outnumbered" is not in his vocabulary.) However, Medallion is loyal to a fault and utterly implacable





whenever his master is in danger. If the wearer is not already a knight, Medallion feels it is his duty to "instruct" his new master in the intricacies, duties, privileges, chivalric code, and honor of the wearers new calling—whether the wearer wishes it or not.

XP Value: 3,600 **GP Value:** 8,000

The Urn of the Blue Vishap

Crafted long ago in the lands of Zakhara by the ancient sha'ir Shalik ibn Shakuffar, the genie trap known as the *Urn of the Blue Vishap* was used to imprison the wicked marid named Merifa of the Pearl Lagoons. It was then hurled into lands far beyond Zakhara, never to be seen again . . . until the busy Hands of Fate turned a page in the Great Book of the Loregiver. Four hundred years later, the *Urn of the Blue Vishap* returned to Zakhara in a corsair's sea chest. The *urn*

has since appeared in countless rawuns' (bard's) tales of evil sorcerers, sa'lucs (thieves), heroes, and nomads throughout the Land of Fate. The urn is now said to reside in the shadowed vaults of Assassin Mountain, though who but the Grandfather of Assassins can know whether that rumor is true?

Description: *The Urn of the Blue Vishap* is a heavy enameled urn that stands between one and four feet high, depending on the whim of the *urn's* dread servant. Decorated with gold and lapis lazuli waves, sea serpents, and other aquatic motifs, the urn takes its name from the carved vishap's head that crowns the golden lid. At the time of the urn's creation, the image of the vishap was used to warn people of evil magic or dangerous paths. This warning should be heeded. The marid Merifa escaped Shalik's prison centuries ago after tricking her liberator

into taking her place. Now the urn is truly named, for it now holds a titanic, blue-winged vishap of awesome power.

The "vishap" is not really a vishap at all, but an old blue dragon named Saluuknir from the Raurin Desert in Southern Faerûn.

Saluuknir (Blue Dragon): INT Very; AL LE; AC -4; MV 9, fly 24; HD 14 (108 hp); THAC0 8; #AT 3 (1-6/1-6/3-24); BW Lightning bolt-5' × 100' (Dmg 16d8+8); MR 35%; ML 20. innate powers: *create/destroy water* (thrice/day), imitate sounds (at will), *dust devil* (once/day), *ventriloquism* (once/day).

Saluuknir can cast the following Wizard spells (at 7th level): *dancing lights*, *feather fall*, *sleep*, *knock*, and *mirror image*.

While bound to the urn, Saluuknir can exercise the following powers:

1. Grant a *limited wish* (twice/week).
2. Assume *gaseous form* (at will).
3. Alter his size (to one-fourth of his original length—twice/day).
4. Resists all spells or items that alter, control, or confuse the mind (+4 on saves vs. possession, charm, and similar effects).

Rubbing the *Urn* summons Saluuknir. He is an irascible and claustrophobic wyrm given to petty acts of arrogance, bullying, and avarice. His greatest desire (besides his freedom) is to have five minutes alone with Merifa of the Pearl Lagoons. Despite all his grumbling and evil ways, the power of the urn compels him to bend all his power into the fulfillment of three wishes or tasks demanded by whoever frees him. While Saluuknir will not twist the wording of his summoners wishes in the manner of an ifrit or other evil creature, he does whatever he can to persuade his summoner to find and punish Merifa.

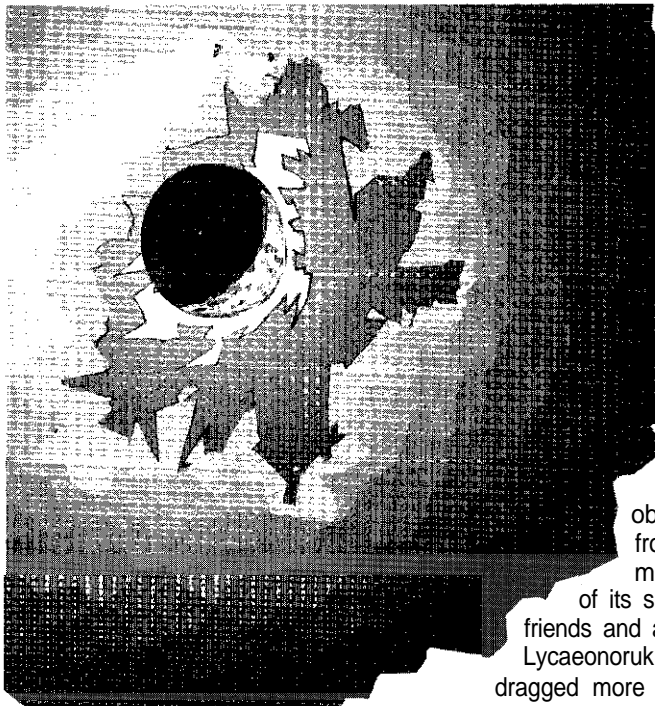
Saluuknir cannot directly harm the summoner or any living creature, unless he or the *Urn* are threatened, and he must also fulfill the summoner's tasks or wishes to the letter.

XP Value: 20,000 **GP Value:** 40,000

Lycaeonorukke

Lycaeonorukke (pronounced Lie-KAY-on-oh-ROOK-ah), A.K.A. the Silver Wolf, was fashioned by Warthyr the Worrier of Silvermoon as a gift for Lyosse, an adventuring priestess of Tymora. Instead of keeping the wizard's gift, however, Lyosse gave the figurine to a companion before venturing into the High Forest. She was never seen again.

Since then, stories (all true) of a savage beast have circulated up and down the



Sword Coast. In all the stories, the beast is described as a huge wolf with silver gray fur and uncanny intelligence, who fights with terrible strength. The wolf is none other than the Lycaeonorukke. The most recent tale of the Silver Wolf puts the figurine about 50 miles south of Baldur's Gate and in the possession of Ulfor Tenears, a sadistic Huntmaster of Malar.

Description: As a figurine, the silver Wolf sits on its haunches with its muzzle pointed toward an unseen moon. Written on the underside is the name "Lycaeonorukke." Speaking this name aloud summons the Silver Wolf.

Lycaeonorukke: INT Avg; AL NG; AC 6; MV 18; HD 4+4 (36 hp); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3-6 hp; MR 5%; ML 16.

The Silver Wolf weighs well over 200 lbs. He has a white face, pewter gray

flanks and tail and silver-gray belly, chest and legs. His amber eyes reflect intelligence.

When alone with his summoner, Lycaeonorukke acts like a large, affectionate, and stupid puppy. But when battle is joined, the Silver Wolf becomes the experienced alpha wolf, taking charge and tolerating no disobedience from its summoner or any of its summoner's friends and allies.

Lycaeonorukke has dragged more than one of his foolish charges away from the battlefield.

Lycaeonorukke has one serious weakness. He is confused by paradoxes (e.g., a zombie looks and smells dead, but moves anyway). The Silver Wolf will either investigate the situation further or refuse to obey.

The Silver Wolf has several powers which he can use in the hunt or to protect his master. Lycaeonorukke can:

1. *Wind walk* once every night when the moon is full.
2. Track prey with the same proficiency as an onyx dog.
3. Harm those creatures that can be harmed only by silver or +1 weapons (e.g., werewolves).
4. Makes all saving throws as if he were a 4th-level ranger.

Lycaeonorukke may be called once a day and requires a full month to recover if "slain."

XP Value: 5,000 **GP Value:** 10,000

Bruce Schmidt hails from Brooks, Alberta, where he enjoys reading books and watching fantasy films.





ARCAINE



Magic of Sight and Sound

by Lloyd Brown

illustrated by David Kooharian

Morion the Bard, master entertainer and storyteller of Faerûn, has collected a great number of spells throughout his travels, some of them traveling from different Prime Material Planes. Often called simply “the Bard” because of his fame, he commonly uses his spells to give life to his shows, enhancing his own theatrical performances or writing magical effects into his plays and then selling his own spellcasting services to those troupes willing and able to pay his price. Although Morion’s great love is for the play, to adventurers he is better known for his brilliant and flashy spells.

Morion refers to his spell repertoire as “magic of sight and sound.” The phrase “magic of sight and sound” could theoretically include the whole range of illusionist spells, but this unique selection of spells draws from several different schools to achieve its effects. Anything that creates sound or light—or that depends on sound or light to deliver its effects—is considered a part of this informal category of magic. Sight and sound magic also includes illusions that mimic the caster’s own form without change. Existing spells from this class include *shout*, *audible glamer*, *light*, *color spray*, the prismatic spells, *mirror image*, *mislead*, and *rainbow pattern*.

While Morion’s spellbooks contain many spells common to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting and the spells from the *Complete Bard’s Handbook*, the tome he protects most closely is the one identified here. Morion shows a great understanding of magic (for a bard), and though he cannot research spells on his own, he describes them in such detail that a researching wizard has little trouble understanding exactly what Morion seeks when the Bard comes to purchase the wizard’s services. Morion asks any one wizard to research only one or two spells, so his inventions are not concentrated in a single person’s hands.

The Bard’s brilliance is seen in the fact that some of his spells include those of a higher level than bards can normally use. (The *PLAYER’S OPTION™: Spells & Magic* reference allows bards to learn spells higher than sixth level.)

Whether out of pride or caution, Morion is secretive about his specially commissioned spells—so much so that he has frequently

found occasion to cast such spells as *hostile images* to defend himself against fellow bards and jealous wizards who coveted his secrets. Morion freely trades other, more common spells, so this secrecy is often the subject of rumor. Considering his might and popularity, however, it is almost certain that he has had some contact with the Harpers, although he does not seem to be active in that organization himself. It would not be a surprise to his fans if members of that organization were seen using some of these spells.

Morion's Spellbook

The tome of the Bard's spells is jet-black with a hard cover, possibly made of some sort of shell. Most who have seen the book speculate that it is covered with the shell of a strange turtle. It is bound in gold, and the lock is made of the same material. The lock itself is a complicated device that must be undone with skill or magic—Morion destroyed the only key to prevent intrusion. The book opens for Morion himself upon verbal command.

Once within the covers, the reader is disappointed to see that each page appears blank until it is touched—and a secret command word is spoken. If the word is known, the initial disappointment turns to awe as the words and glyphs are reproduced in three dimensions in the space above the page, in brilliant color, leaving little doubt as to the nature of the book. The smooth, stark white pages contract strongly with the dark cover and the bright colors dancing above the page, creating an impressive image.

First-Level Spells

Apparition

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Caster Only

Saving Throw: None

This spell causes the caster to seem to turn wispy and insubstantial, as if under the effects of a *wraithform* spell. The caster's outline becomes fuzzy and indistinct, his body becomes translucent, and his features become difficult to distinguish.

This spell is distinct from *blur* in that it does not afford any AC bonus or make the caster harder to attack in any way. The caster does appear very much like a ghost, however, and enemies might flee,

attack with holy water, or raise holy symbols to protect themselves. The caster is fully corporeal and can use spells, talk, and move normally. The spell can be very effective if the caster briefly mouths words to strangers, moves away silently, and passes through an illusory wall.

The material component is smoke or steam, which the caster must create or carry somehow.

Chromatic Crown

(Alteration, Abjuration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: None

The popular first-level spell *chromatic orb* has given rise to many variations, some more common than others. *Chromatic crown* creates a sparkling headpiece adorned with gems of every color, which appears on the head of the targeted creature. Depending on the caster's level and desire, one gem predominates over the others. The crown offers a bonus of +4 against one class of attacks, depending on the primary color of the crown selected at the moment of casting. See **Table 1** for a summary of the *chromatic crown* effects by caster level and predominant gem color. As with the *chromatic orb* spell, a caster can choose a lesser-level effect if he so desires. The *chromatic crown* does not function if any headgear other than non-magical wool or cloth is worn.

The required material component is a small golden crown. The crown need not have great detail and costs only 25 gp to make.

Chromatic Rod

(Conjuration)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 6 rounds

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a 2'-long scintillating rod that appears in the caster's hand. The rod can be used to touch an opponent, who must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or stand motionless for 1d6 rounds while myriad colors dance before his eyes, completely blocking out all other sight. The target is effectively blind, with a -4 AC penalty and -4 THAC0 penalty.

During the four rounds the rod is in existence, it can affect as many targets as the caster can successfully attack. Note that the wizard might gain extra attacks for employing a *haste* spell. Likewise, if the DM uses the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Combat & Tactics* rules, the mage might gain attacks of opportunity.

Like the *chromatic orb* spell, the *chromatic rod* bypasses metal armor; only magical bonuses and Dexterity adjustments apply to the AC of a target in metal armor. Also, the caster is not considered to be attacking without a weapon, making this spell much more effective than *shocking grasp* or other touch spells.

The material component is a small glass rod or prism. A light source must be present for this spell to function; it does not work in total darkness.

Size Disguise

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 5 rounds/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Caster only

Saving Throw: None

This spell makes the caster appear as much as twice or as little as one-quarter his original height. The spell's primary use is for intimidation, but a larger-seeming caster might be missed by attacks that enemies aim at his head or chest. If the illusion is cast for maximum enlarging effect, the caster gains a -4

Table 1: Chromatic Crown Effects

Caster Level	Predominant Color	Protects vs.
1	White (clear)	Cold
2	Red	Fire/Heat
3	Orange	Acid
4	Yellow	Petrification/Paralyzation
5	Green	Rod/Staff/Wand
6	Turquoise	Poison/Petrification/Polymorph
8	Blue	Breath Weapons
10	Violet	Spells
12	Prismatic	All saves

AC bonus on first melee or missile attacks, as unwitting attackers might aim at a point higher than the casters real form extends. Subsequent attacks suffer only a -2 penalty, as attacks that would otherwise have hit pass through the illusion, letting enemies know that something is amiss.

The material component for size disguise is a small telescoping steel rod.

Morion and other bards often use this spell to create convincing portrayals of ogres and giants, or pixies and other "wee folk" during magically enhanced performances.

Second-level Spells

Captain's Voice

(Alteration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: Neg.

Ship captains are often recipients of this spell, cast by an associate wizard or bard. *Captain's voice* allows the target to speak in a normal voice (or louder, if desired) and be heard clearly in a 90'-radius area, as if the listeners were standing beside the speaker. Ship captains and military commanders often use the *captain's voice* spell for giving commands to large groups of people simultaneously. The caster's voice carries through wooden walls without restriction, but stone walls greater than 6" thick stop the *captain's voice* from carrying. Obviously, this spell can be used effectively within wooden homes, towers, or fortifications as well.

Willing subjects of this spell need make no saving throw. An unwilling target can be affected by the spell, making his words easily heard throughout the area. A person so affected notices that his voice is magnified on a successful Wisdom check, made once each turn.

The material component is a small bullhorn made of ivory or horn.

A common clerical variant of this spell is known as *priest's sermon*, because some priesthoods allow an identical spell (from the sphere of All) used during religious ceremonies or worship in large temples.

Chorus of Valor

(Enchantment/Charm,
Invocation/Evocation)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: One round/level, up to one turn

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 30' radius of caster

Saving Throw: None

This spell is unusual in that those who wish to benefit from the magic must sing along with the caster. The caster sings for one round alone, and any who wish to join may participate in subsequent rounds for as long as they are within the area of effect. The lyrics are easy to follow, and even those without the singing proficiency are able to sing along for the purposes of gaining the spell's benefits.

The spell allows those in the chorus to resist *fear* spells, giving them a +3 bonus on all saves vs. magical fear for the duration of the spell. Furthermore, the Morale of NPCs increases by 2.

Each member of the chorus can also attack courageously, using the THAC0 of a character (or monster) three levels higher. A 7th-level Rogue, therefore, temporarily gains the THAC0 of a 10th-level Rogue.

The material component is a small, brightly colored banner which is not consumed by the casting.

Hostile Images

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Range: 60 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: One target

Saving Throw: Neg.

The target of a *hostile images* spell might think at first that the casters spell has gone awry, for 2-8 images of the target appear around him, as if the caster had cast a *mirror image* spell on the target. Once these images come into being, however, they turn and attack the target. If the target changes weapons or casts spells, the images do the same. If he runs, the images follow at the same speed, although they cannot move beyond 60 yards from the caster.

The illusions cause no damage, real or illusory, although they appear to try to kill the target with great vigor. When struck for even 1 hp damage, an image disappears. Their main effect on the target, besides confusion, is to use up his shield defenses (if any) and to occupy front and flank spaces, enabling real attackers to take positions to the rear and unshielded flanks.

Hostile images produces the same number of images as a *mirror image*

spell: 1d4+1 for every three levels, up to a maximum of eight images.

The material components are a small mirror and a mobius strip; the latter item is consumed in the casting.

Hypnotic Harmonies

(Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 30 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 20 yard radius

Saving Throw: Neg.

This enchantment is similar to the *hypnotic pattern* spell except that its effects rely on sound rather than sight, and its magic is drawn from a different school. The caster sings or plays a musical instrument to cast the spell, which causes any affected creature to become fascinated and stand listening for as long as the caster maintains the music, plus two additional rounds. The spell can captivate a maximum of 24 levels or Hit Dice of creatures. All creatures affected must be within the area of effect, and each gains a save vs. spell. A damage-inflicting attack on an affected creature immediately frees it from the spell.

Hypnotic harmonies can be heard normally, according to the terrain, intervening walls or objects, and acoustical design, but the magic affects creatures who hear the harmonies only if they are within 60 feet of the caster. The caster must remain still to maintain the harmonies and may perform no other actions while maintaining the spell.

Hypnotic harmonies is popular among bards, who often attempt to disguise its casting among their nonmagical music. It guarantees a large crowd at the inn, if nothing else.

Mute

(Alteration)

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Neg.

A wizard uses the *mute* spell to keep a target from casting spells that require verbal components, keep a traitor or witness silent, or teach verbose companions a lesson. If the spell recipient fails its save, it cannot speak, scream, sing, roar, or make any noise from the throat or mouth. No cure spells alleviate this effect, but the caster can end the spell at any time by silent act of will, and

a *dispel magic* spell is also effective. Undead are not affected by a *mute* spell.

The material component is a pair of small balls of cotton, which are consumed by the casting.

Third-Level Spells

Dirge of Despondency

(Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 90 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: One 10'-cube per level

Saving Throw: Neg.

The *dirge of despondency* creates mournful tunes that seem to come from deep string instruments. The sound affects all intelligent creatures within the area of effect, overwhelming them with deep hopelessness, as the fourth-level Wizard spell *emotion*. Targets who fail their save submit to the demands of any opponent—surrendering, fleeing, etc. If not commanded to surrender or leave, the creatures are 75% likely to do nothing each round and 25% likely to retreat. As with the hopelessness effect of the *emotion* spell, this effect countered by the *emotion* spell's hope effect.

Although they have not yet been documented, other third-level musical versions of the various *emotion effects* are widely suspected. Only time will tell whether Morion has successfully commissioned such spells.

Rumble

(Alteration)

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 30'-radius sphere

Saving Throw: None

This spell causes a loud vibration that could be thunder, an avalanche, an earthquake, a stampede, or an impending volcanic eruption. The sound begins softly and seemingly distant, then rises to a thundering crescendo near the end of the round. Creatures of Non-, Animal, or Semi-Intelligence must make a Morale check or flee for 3d4 rounds. Creatures with greater Intelligence gain a saving throw vs. paralyzation. Those who fail must stop moving and brace themselves, but the spell effect does not force them to stop attacking, defending, or casting spells. *Rumble* can be used to stop a cavalry charge; if the horses don't flee, worried riders might rein them in anyway.

The material component is a cylindrical drum, about 12" tall and 6" across.

Shrieker Wail

(Alteration)

Range: 60 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: One object

Saving Throw: None

This spell is often used as a distraction or to completely clear out an area that the caster must defend against intruders. *Shrieker wail* causes an inanimate object to emit a loud wail exactly like that of a shrieker, possibly drawing in nearby monsters. It might be used to bait a trap, draw guards to the wrong part of a castle, or possibly attract a hungry (and uncontrolled!) purple worm.

The material component is a tiny silver horn, twisted into a precise shape. It commonly costs about 25 gp.

Silent Passage

(Alteration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: One creature per three caster levels

Saving Throw: None

This spell enhances or bestows the ability to Move Silently. Wizards often use it to mask the sounds of a heavily encumbered fighter or a pack animal. *Silent passage* masks the sounds of armor yet allows normal vocal communication and spellcasting. The spell enables the spell recipient(s) to Move Silently with a 90% chance of success, or with a +50% bonus to those who already possess the Move Silently ability (maximum of 95%).

This spell is normally used to sneak past or surprise sentries or dangerous monsters the caster wishes to avoid.

The material component is a piece of velvet, wrapped around and between two pieces of any kind of metal.

Fourth-Level Spells

Inspirational Theme

(Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 90 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: Up to one target per level in a 30' radius

Saving Throw: None

This spell produces the sounds of loud trumpets blaring a charge. Any of the caster's allies hearing this theme receive a +4 bonus to Morale, attack at +1 to hit, and receive +2 bonuses to damage rolls and saves vs. subsequent enchantment/charm spells for the duration of the spell.

The caster can designate up to one person per level to benefit from the triumphant charge. Those who are not chosen as spell recipients hear the horns as a distant but menacing sound.

Protection from light

(Abjuration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 5 rounds/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: One target

Saving Throw: Neg.

The blind wizard Marrol created this spell. The target and all of his or her equipment become totally black, as the spell repels all light. The lack of color allows the target to Hide in Shadows at a base 20% chance (or with a +20% to any existing Hide in Shadows ability, maximum of 95%). *Protection from light* provides protective benefits by giving the target the ability to make all saving throws against light-based spells cast at the eyes (e.g., *color spray*, *hypnotic pattern*, and *light* spells). Willing recipients of this spell need make no saving throw.

The material component is a black hood, similar to the type falconers use to cover the eyes of their birds.

Fifth-Level Spells

Echolocation

(Alteration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/2 levels

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: None

Another of Marrol's creations, this spell proved useful in the Underdark, where he vented his rage against the hated illithids for years of slavery. *Echolocation* allows the caster or other spell recipient to emit a constant high-pitched sound that reflects back to him like a bat's sonar. The magic of the spell allows the caster to hear and interpret these reflected sounds, allowing him or her to "see" up to 60 yards.

This mode of finding one's way is superior to normal vision in several ways. Gaze attacks do not affect the

recipient who closes his eyes and relies on the *echolocation* spell entirely. Darkness, fog, and steam can be pierced without inhibiting the recipients ability to find things. Illusions that are not also phantasms are unseen. The sense is good enough for the spell recipient to cast targeted spells like *magic missile*.

The spell carries several disadvantages as well. The spell recipients "line of sight" is only a 60-degree arc. Magical deafness or *silence* renders this sense useless. The acuity of the *echolocation* is not great, so the recipient can identify people he or she knows within 10 yards, but only general shape and sizes can be determined beyond 10 yards. Any missile weapons used by the spell recipient are -1 "to hit."

The material component is a bit of bat fur. If the DM's campaign features other creatures that use natural echolocation, their hair (or scales, etc.) can be substituted as a material component.

Infrared Light

(Alteration)

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: 10' radius sphere

Saving Throw: See below

Human spellcasters make frequent use of this spell, since it can confer upon several recipients the ability to see in the dark, as per the *infravision* spell. The spell is similar to the *light* spell in that it can also be cast on an item and carried. If cast at a creature with infravision, it blinds the creature for the duration of the spell (saving throw negates).

All creatures (hostile or benign) within the area of effect during the casting of the spell are afforded 120' infravision; creatures that enter the area before or after the spell is cast are not affected.

The material component is a small coin, stone, or gem that has once had a *light* or *continual light* spell cast upon it, and a hair, nail, or other body part of a creature with infravision.

Sixth-Level Spells

Otto's Triple Chime

(Alteration, Abjuration)

Range: 60 yards + 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: One round

Casting Time: 6

Area of Effect: 10' cube

Saving Throw: None

Named for the famous mage of Oerth but reportedly not created by him, *Otto's triple chime* creates a resonant tone that repeats twice. At the end of the first chime, every closure (door, chest lid, clasps, etc.) in the area of effect is affected by a *dispel magic*, removing all protective abjurations and trap magics. (See *dispel magic* spell for details.) The *dispel* does not affect other magical enchantments or dweomers placed upon the closures. After the second chime and again after the third, each closure is affected by a *knock* spell, unlocking up to four closures.

Although this spell might affect unwanted targets as well, it is a good way to make a large amount of treasure accessible quickly. Cast at a group of enemies, it can pop off their armor by unhooking clasps, unbuckling saddles, or even spilling gold out of previously secured pouches and backpacks.

The *triple chime* is highly favored because its great range allows the spell to be **used** against doors or chests from a distance too great for the caster to be affected by traps that might be triggered by the spell.

The material component is a set of copper, silver, and gold keys worth 10 gp, 50 gp, and 250 gp respectively.

Prismatic Shell

(Conjuration)

Range: 0

Components: V

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: 10'-radius sphere

Saving Throw: None

This spell enables lower-level casters to draw upon part of the *prismatic sphere* and *prismatic wall* spells for limited protection. The caster may choose one shell of the prismatic sphere spell and place it around himself or herself. The shell remains immobile, is the color of the caster's choosing, protects against the appropriate attack form, and is brought down in the same manner as the same color of shell produced by the prismatic sphere spell.

Because the shell lacks the full visual effects of the *prismatic sphere* or *prismatic wall* spell, the shell also lacks the blinding capability of the higher-level spells.

Seventh-Level Spells

Aria of Peace

(Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 0

Components: V

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 60' radius

Saving Throw: Neg.

When the caster begins an *aria of peace*, sweet calming tunes of many instruments fill the air. The sound instantly calms any hostile creature, compelling it to stop fighting. Elves and half-elves receive their usual resistance to this powerful *charm*.

Affected creatures cannot attack anyone while under the spell's effect. No hostile moves can be made. Weapons cannot be drawn, those affected cannot use violent defense modes (like a *wall of fire*), nor can they move to position themselves for an attack. Those who were previously engaged in combat or closing for a fight must stand still.

If a creature resists this spell by making a successful saving throw, he can attack others who can defend themselves against that creature only. These defenses cannot include area-of-effect spells that also attack creatures who are not assaulting the defender. Hostile creatures must resist the spell every round they remain within the area of effect, making saving throws and/or magic resistance checks until subdued by the spell, until they leave the area, the caster ends the spell, or the creature is killed or rendered unconscious.

The spell lasts as long as the caster maintains it, plus one round per four levels of experience thereafter. Once the caster ceases concentration, he usually uses personal persuasive abilities or enchantments to avoid further violence.

Evil creatures rarely use this spell. It is common under a different name among sorcerers of Zakhara and might have originated in the Land of Fate.

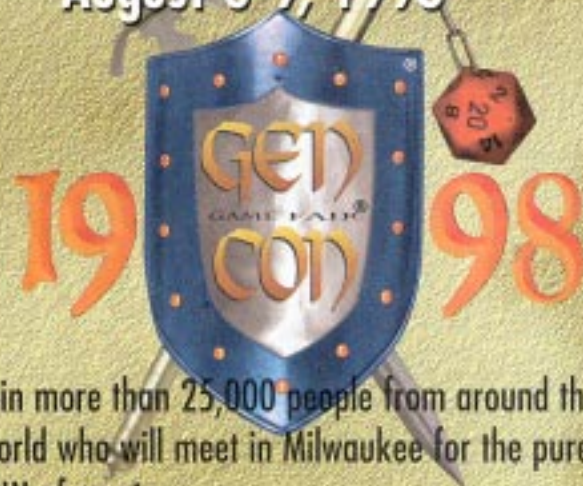


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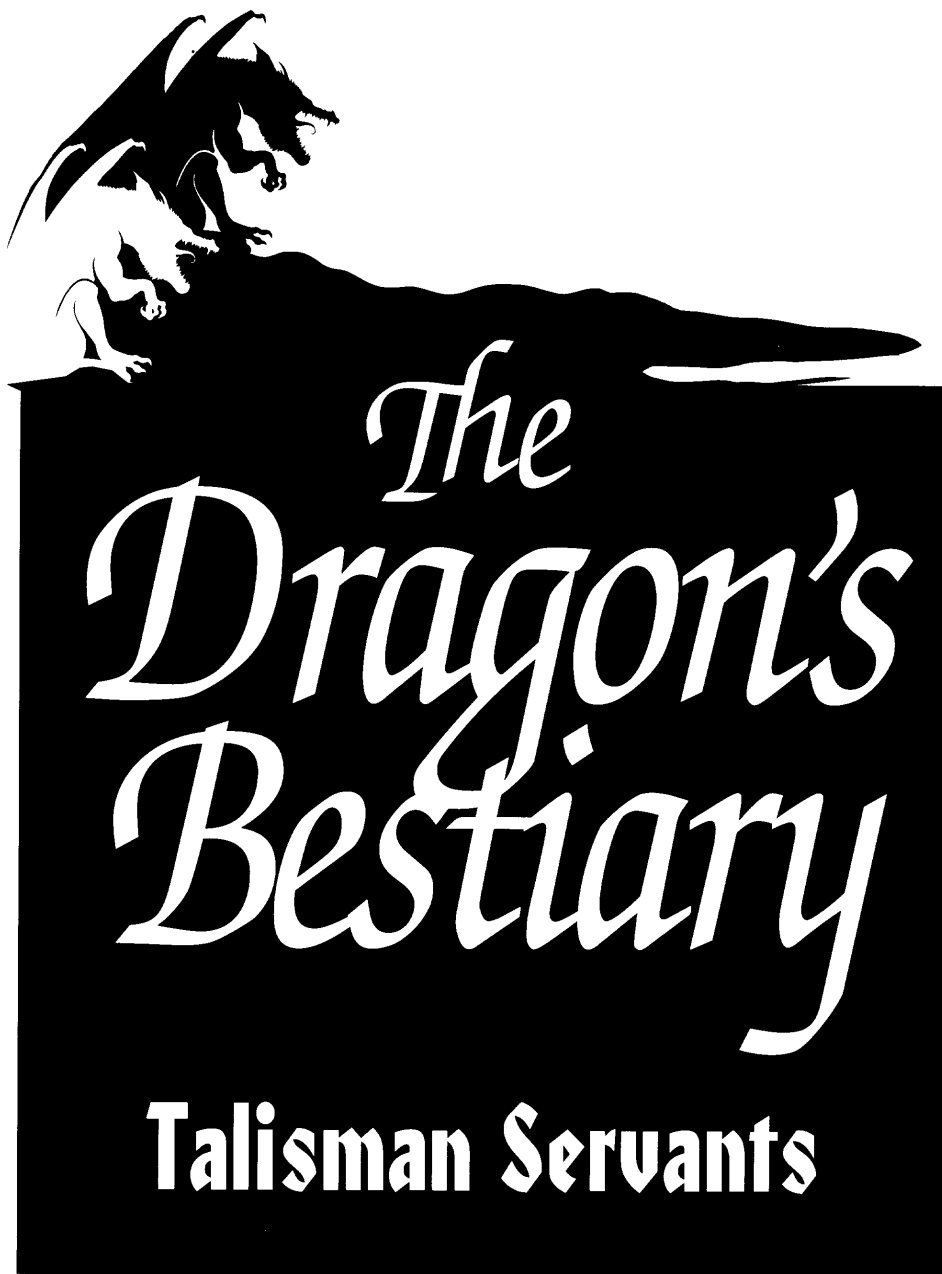
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The Dragon's Bestiary

Talisman Servants

by Bruce Schmidt

illustrated by George Vrbanic

In 1846 D.R., Netheril was just entering the height of its glory, and magic was the lifeblood of the empire. Wizards spent years perfecting the magical items and spells that would inspire future legends and fill apprentices' spellbooks for generations to come. In that year, a new breed of magical automaton was born in the workshops of the brotherhood of arcane craftsmen known simply as Mystra's Anvil. These constructs were made from at least two different materials, such as stone and iron, and they served their masters in a variety of ways, from carrying heavy loads to murdering a rival. The

master controlled his arcane servant with the aid of a talisman. Thus, the creatures became known as talisman servants.

The talisman servants had one distinct advantage over true golems: they could be made from anything, from old wagons to minor magical items, saving both time and money in construction. At one point, talisman servants outnumbered golems in several regions of the Arcane Empire.

Talisman servants had three disadvantages, however—flaws that eventually doomed them. Their masters soon discovered, often at the risk of their lives,

DM's Notes

❖ If a talisman is destroyed, use the following table to determine its fate:

Roll 1d100

01-50 Servant collapses into useless junk, never to rise again.

51-00 Servant freezes in position. It cannot be revived until a new talisman is made. When a servant is destroyed, a talisman disintegrates into useless powder.

❖ Like other constructed beings, talisman servants are subject to wild magic effects (as detailed in *Code of the Harpers*, pp. 96-99). If this accessory is not handy, a DM can substitute magical items to a servants design instead of assigning wild powers. The table below then applies.

Roll 1d100

01-50 The servant can use the magical item as any character would (e.g., a *cloak of flying* allows a servant to fly).

51-00 Every magical item added to the servant's body confers an extra 5% magic resistance on the servant to a total of 90%. If the servant is "killed," the magical items are also destroyed.

that the talisman and the servant could not be separated by more than a mile. If that happened, or if the talisman was lost or destroyed, the servant would not respond to commands. Also, the talisman servant possessed a degree of sentience not normally seen in automatons. Some servants were so aware of their environments that they self activated and ran amok until their masters could regain control. But the most unnerving danger was that certain aspects of a master's personality would be imprinted on the servant. For example, if a mage had a strong dislike of water, his servant would balk at every river crossing. Such personal quirks quickly earned the talisman servants notoriety.

When Netheril collapsed in -290 D.R., many wizards reluctantly destroyed or hid their creations to prevent their enemies from turning their magic against them. To this day, bards tell of rogue automatons, while mages search for elusive texts on the construction of the talisman servants.

Here are three of the talisman servants of lost Netheril.

Talisman Servant, Caravan

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Land
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Non-
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2-4)
TREASURE TYPE:	Special
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

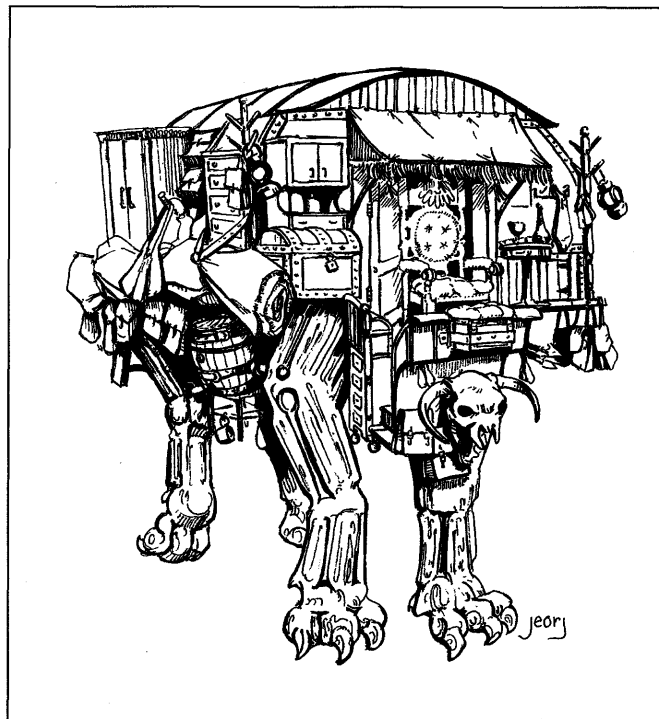
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	1
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	12 (72 hp)
THACO:	9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Crush, bite of sharpness, bellow
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Wizard Locks, +1 weapon to hit, Immune to mind influencing spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	15%
SIZE:	M (7' at shoulder, 11' long)
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	7,000

Caravan servants are created by a wizard of at least 15th level, who forms the automaton from a variety of sculpted stone, furniture, barding, leather tacking, saddles, pouches, knobs, spikes, hooks, straps, sacks, and saddlebags for the purpose of carrying and/or pulling large quantities of cargo (up to 1,200 lbs.). All caravan servants have between four and eight sturdy clawed legs and a head. Beyond these requirements, the wizard's artistic whims are as important as functional considerations, making the caravan servant the most varied in appearance of all the talisman servants. For example, a caravan servant that belonged to a wizard who favored dragons might have a dragon's skull for a head, a large trunk as its body, and a length of chain for a tail. The talisman associated with this type of servant usually takes the form of a whistle, a walking stick, riding crop, or a mahout's goad.

Combat: Designed as a beast of burden, the caravan servant is not a dependable fighting machine. However, in an age of numerous thieves and brigands, the caravan servant is capable of protecting its master and its cargo. On the command of its master, the caravan servant can *wizard lock* every drawer, saddlebag, or trunk that makes up its body (and only these containers). Any tampering on the servants compartments without the master's approval triggers the servants defenses.

A caravan servant uses its tremendous Strength (24) and weight to pin, smash, or crush its opponent for 1d10 hp damage per strike. Alternatively, it bites with its powerful jaws with the same effectiveness as a *sword of sharpness*, also for 1d10 hp damage. A natural attack roll of 19 or 20 results in the loss of an opponents limb.

A caravan servant also provides a fearless and solid barrier against hailstorms of arrows and can open doors, gates and fences which might otherwise be closed (a 7 in 8 chance of success). When a wizard merchant came to a city, he needed a way to alert the guard without straining his voice, thus he gave his servant a voice—a loud one. A caravan servant can deliver a thunderous bellow three times a day. This



roar can panic any beast or person not trained for battle with the effect of a *fear* spell; a successful save vs. spell negates the effect.

The caravan servant may be harmed only by weapons of +1 or greater enchantment. It is unaffected by magic that affects the mind (e.g., *feeblemind*, *charm*, and illusion spells). Many wizards named their caravan servants (e.g., Chamfron, Lilac, or Bender). This was not an indication of soft emotions but rather a means of bonding and recognition between master and servant. If a stranger stole a talisman and took command without a proper introduction, the results often proved fatal. A caravan servant might ignore the interloper, balk at his commands, or even attack. There is one story of a caravan servant who chased a foolish scoundrel through a town before crushing the man against the prison gates.

There is a 50% chance that a caravan servant will self-activate if someone says its name or it is in mortal peril. Once activated, it yawns, stamps its feet, and begins to look for its master, smashing through doors and walls in its search.

Habitat/Society: Unlike other automatons, caravan servants have a reputation for being amiable, loyal, tireless, affectionate, and steady. As such, caravan servants were well known and welcomed in many towns. When Netheril was in its glory, caravan servants could be found in any market square or livery stable, or encountered in an overland merchant caravan in the company of their masters. In modern times, functioning servants are rare, found hidden away in desolate ruins or following an ancient path, bringing the bones of its master home.

Ecology: As created beings, caravan servants need not eat, drink, or rest; nor do they impact greatly on their environs. An intact caravan servant usually (85% of the time) has cargo when encountered. A cargo may consist of anything from a portion of a dragon's hoard to a load of manure.

Talisman Servant, Gladiator

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any Land
FREQUENCY: Very Rare
ORGANIZATION: Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
DIET: Non-
INTELLIGENCE: Low (4-6)
TREASURE TYPE: Special
ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil

NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: 0/-6
MOVEMENT: 15
HIT DICE: 16 (96 hp)
THACO: 7
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-20/2-16/2-16
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Berserker rage, poison, bear hug
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Magical bracers, +2 or better weapon to hit, immune to mind-influencing spells

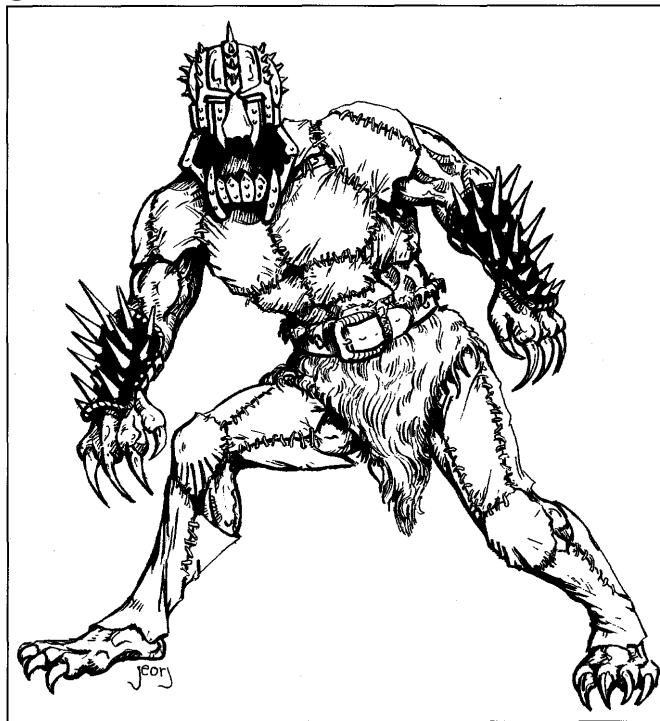
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 25%
SIZE: L (9-11' tall)
MORALE: Fearless (19-20)
XP VALUE: 12,000

These terrifying servants are created by a sadistic mage of at least 18th level. Crafted from stone, leather, and either iron or bronze, this murderous construct appears as a burly humanoid dressed as a barbarian or a pit fighter. Its head resembles a grotesque helmet with eyes that glow with malevolent fury when activated. The oversized jaws and fangs are capable of engulfing a victim's head. A gladiator servant's forearms and paws are sheathed in spike-studded bracers and tipped with razor-sharp claws. The talisman most often associated with this type of servant is a dagger, bracer, medallion, or spiked glove bearing the symbol of a violent power such as Bane, Tempus, Loviatar, or Malar.

Combat: With an effective Strength of 20 and the reflexes of a seasoned brawler, gladiator servants exist to slaughter for their masters' amusement. When attacking a man-sized or smaller opponent, a gladiator can trap its victim in a bear hug on a natural roll of 19 or 20. From that point, the servant cannot attack with its arms but gains a +3 attack roll bonus when biting its victim. If an opponent is too strong for a gladiator to take head-on, the servant resorts to the unsavory tactic of wearing its victim down by throwing whatever or whomever it can grab. On occasion (10% per round), the gladiator servant actually slips into a berserker rage. While berserk, the servant can attack at twice the normal rate and keeps attacking until all living things within 20' are dead or its master can regain control. For the master to regain control, he must roll 6d10 and score lower than the total of his Intelligence and Wisdom scores.

As with its mortal counterpart, a gladiator servant pauses just before it delivers the coup de grace to observe a well-known point of arena etiquette: it looks to its master for the classic hand signal of life and death. If the master decides to spare the victim, the servant will withdraw but if the master decides to have the victim killed, the gladiator complies with a triumphant roar and gruesome results. A berserking gladiator does not pause for this ritual.

A gladiator servant is immune to all mind-affecting magic and can be harmed only by a +2 or greater weapon. In



addition, its bracers act as *shields* +3. As long as the master holds the talisman, the servant will not attack him, even in its berserker state. However, to prevent his servant from going berserk, a wizard must focus all his attention on the gladiator. Thus, spellcasting is impossible, and a wizard's Dexterity falls by two points for the duration of the melee. If someone should manage to steal a gladiator's talisman when it goes berserk, one of the following events occurs:

Roll 1d6

- 1-3 The gladiator freezes for 1-3 rounds while it establishes a link with its new master.
- 4-6 The gladiator falls apart due to the shock of the transfer. All beings within five feet of the servant suffer 2-8 hp damage from falling debris and shrapnel.

A neglected gladiator servant is likely to self activate (75%/day left unattended) especially if placed in an area where violence has recently been committed, such as on a battlefield. A self-activated gladiator embarks on a killing spree until it is destroyed or its master can regain control. Stories of rampaging gladiators decimating entire villages or savaging entire battalions are common in bardic lore.

Habitat/Society: In ancient Netheril, a gladiator servant could be found anywhere but was most often encountered on the blood-soaked sands of sporting arenas or serving as the backbone of a unit of a wizard's shocktroopers. In modern times, a functioning gladiator servant might be found in the dungeons of a long-buried fortress or city (e.g., Spellgard). Due to its berserker tendencies, this type of talisman servant must be closely monitored by its master.

Ecology: As created beings, gladiator servants have no need for food, drink, rest, or air. However, an active gladiator seems to revel in the devastation it wreaks upon its environs. The bracers of a destroyed gladiator are non-magical, but they can be removed and refitted for a human-sized warrior.

Talisman Servant, Mystran

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Land
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Non-
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-10)
TREASURE TYPE:	Special
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1 or 2
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	14 (84 hp)
THACO:	8
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Polearm, gaze weapon
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Surprised only on a 1 or 2, +2 or better weapon to hit, spell immunity, tracking ability

MAGIC RESISTANCE:	35%
SIZE:	L (7-9' tall)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	13,000

Created by a powerful mage and a priest of at least 17th level, this talisman servant is named after Mystra, the Lady of Mysteries. The mystran is the most refined-looking of all the talisman servants. Fashioned from stone and metal (steel, mithril, or silver), a typical mystran appears as an athletic humanoid with an animal head. They almost always wear the robes of the higher clergy of Mystra or the armor and livery of ancient militia. Two features distinguish mystrans from gladiator servants. The eyes of a mystran glow with intelligence and determination, and their ears are long pointed, and alert. The talisman most often associated with a mystran servant is a silver medallion or necklace shaped like an eight-pointed star or shield. In the case of a pair of servants, earrings or bracers serve as talismans. In either case, the talisman is embossed with the interlocking symbols of Mystra and a protective power (e.g., Helm, Berronar, or Yondalla).

Combat: The mystran servant is created to protect a treasure, structure, or person. A mystran never abandons its post. Mystran servants are the most sentient of all automatons. They can understand complex instructions, operate manual traps, and are capable strategists. Mystrans are rarely fooled and possess an excellent memory, being able to remember thieves no matter how much time has passed since the servant last saw them. In addition to their Intelligence, mystran servants are always armed with a magical polearm of some type (+1/+2 vs. thieves). Even unarmed, these servants can still bite an opponent with their stony jaws.

The mystran's eyes are its most potent defense. Each servant possesses one of two different gaze weapons. The first is a paralyzing glare. The victim must save vs. petrification or suffer the effects of a *hold person* or *hold monster* spell, but the effects last only as long as the servant maintains eye contact. The second gaze weapon is a powerful version of the *wizard eye* spell. While this ability has no combat value, the servants master sees everything his servant sees. The wizard must make a system shock roll when the mystran contacts him or else suffer acute vertigo for one round while his eyes adjust to the new perspective. If a mystran duo is encountered, one has



the paralytic gaze and the other has the *wizard eye*. Each ability is performed at the 14th level of ability. In addition, mystran servants are immune to all illusion, *invisibility*, *fear*, and mind-altering spells. A mystran's hearing is very acute, thus it can be surprised only on a 1 or 2. Only weapons of +2 or greater can harm a mystran servant. No mystran pursues a retreating enemy beyond 240' of its post or charge, nor can a mystran break into homes or holy ground. However, if someone steals the mystran's ward or the master's talisman without first destroying the creature, the servant tracks the thief (with the skill of a 7th-level ranger) until he gives up the stolen property. Even seeking sanctuary does not stop a mystran with a mission. A mystran can wait decades for a thief, its righteous gaze looking in through the window every time the rogue looks out. A mystran is the least likely of the talisman servants to self-activate (5% chance). However, on occasion, a mystran activates and acts on a "hunch," prowling restlessly in an 240' arc for 1-8 rounds before it shuts down on its own.

Habitat/Society: Mystran servants served a key role in the security system of a wizard's fortress or priests temple in the Arcane Empire. In the present age of Faerûn, mystrans can be found in the North guarding the inner sanctums and treasuries of the few temples of Azuth, Helm, and Mystra fortunate enough to acquire them or in Nimbral, Halruua, and Thay where powerful and incorruptible guards are essential. If created to watch over a person, a bodyguard mystran might develop a "mother hen" complex which can be most embarrassing for its ward and entertaining for onlookers. Aside from its ward, a mystran rarely associates with anyone other than its partner or master.

Ecology: Mystran servants have no need for rest, food, drink, or air. They do not leave much of an impact on their environment. Not counting whatever treasure it was created to protect, the mystran's polearm and its eyes (gems worth at least 1,000 gp each) are the servants only treasures.

THE ECOLOGY

The Mongrelman

by Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by Steve Bryant

Knuckledragger limped toward the forts gate, an empty wooden bucket in his left hand. He hurried to catch up to the small party gathering there, not wishing to be left behind. This was a momentous occasion for him: for the first time in his four years¹, he was to be allowed outside the four walls of the wooden structure that had been his whole universe. His father, Scale-face, had convinced the others that he was old enough to take part in the duties and responsibilities of an adult.

Karg, the scarred old orc that kept watch at the gate, motioned for the two other guards to open up. As they pulled open the heavy doors, Karg gave the mongrelmen their orders. "Be back in two hours. Don't be late. Remember your families." This last, Knuckledragger knew, was a thinly-veiled threat—any who took the opportunity to escape did

so with the knowledge that their family members back at the fort would be put to death slowly. The orcs were not known for their mercy, and to date no mongrelman had ever failed to return from these excursions outside the fort.

Knuckledragger fell into line behind his father as the mongrelmen shuffled through the gate of the orc fort. Ahead lay the wide world. Who knew what wonders it held? Knuckledragger had heard the stories, of course, and could already reproduce the sounds of many forest creatures, animals he had never seen, but whose calls he had heard imitated by others.²

Once beyond sight of the fort, Knuckledragger sensed a change in the adults around him. They walked with a proud bearing not stooped and hunched as if they wished to shrink into as small and unnoticeable a ball as possible.

1. Mongrelmen, like many other short-lived races, grow quickly. They reach adulthood around age four or five, and they live to a maximum age of 40. Of course, those held as slaves by other races rarely live that long, counting themselves lucky if they live to see 15 or 20 years.

2. Regardless of their facial appearance, mongrelmen enjoy a wide variety of vocal abilities and can precisely imitate just about any noise they hear. This includes noise heard secondhand, so once a single mongrelman hears a particular animal call, he can pass that call on to all other mongrelmen in his tribe. Animal calls make up a large part of mongrelman "music."

3. Mongrelmen prefer not to be seen. They are well aware that their appearance causes disgust and fear (and often ridicule). For this reason, mongrelmen are abnormally fascinated with the concept of invisibility, for it not only hides their twisted bodies from sight but also aids in their pickpocketing abilities. To many, becoming invisible is the ultimate goal, and the quest for a *ring of invisibility* has launched a few mongrelmen on the path of the adventurer.

4. All mongrelmen have two names: their "true name" and their "slave name." Their true name is most often an animal noise. A mongrelman is given his true name at birth, and it is this name by which other mongrelmen call him.

Knuckledragger was well accustomed to the posture, having witnessed it day in and day out during his lifetime as a thrall among the orcs. It was always best to escape notice, especially when living with cruel masters. A slave unseen was a slave not being beaten or tormented.³

Ah, but now sweet freedom! Knuckledragger drank in a deep breath, tasting the exotic fragrances as they passed through his muzzle. A dozen different wildflowers tickled at his shiny black nose, vying for his attention. How different things smelled out here, when compared to the stench inside the orc fortress!

Knuckledragger pricked up his ear—his left one, the one covered with a soft, downy fur—as he became aware of the sounds of the forest ahead of him. Birds chattered in the trees, insects droned, and somewhere, a woodpecker drilled a tree in search of dinner.

"What are you thinking, *robin chirp?*" asked Scale-face, looking down at his son and calling him by his true name.⁴

"This, its all so beautiful!" gasped Knuckledragger. "If only we could stay here forever!"

"If only," agreed Scale-face. "But you know that we cannot. The orcs are our masters; still, perhaps someday this will not be so."

The small band trudged into the forest. There were six of them in all: besides Knuckledragger and his father, there was Half-Human, so named because, by the whims of fate, he had been born with human or human-like features along the entire left side of his body; Crab Leg who also had a crabman's eyestalk growing out his face, and who could therefore look in two places at once; One-Horn, who always held his head sideways because of the weight of the minotaur horn growing from the right side of his head; and Little Shorty, whose predominantly ogrish facial features looked very out of place on a body supported by stubby little goblin legs.

Once several hundred feet into the shade of the forest, the band stopped.

Other races, unable (or unwilling) to perfect the animal mimicry necessary to pronounce a mongrelman's true name, often come up with a name for the mongrelman that they can pronounce. Referred to by mongrelmen as their slave names, they are the names by which they are known by other races. Such names are usually derogatory but somewhat descriptive of the mongrelman's physical appearance. Mongrelmen do not give themselves slave names, but they often adopt the first slave name given to them by others, no matter how derogatory. After all, a mongrelman doesn't really care what other races call him—he knows his true name.



"Give your bucket to ~~wolverine growl~~," advised Scale-face. Puzzled, Knuckledragger looked at Crab Leg, who reached out expectantly. "But I thought I was going to pick berries with you!" he complained.

"~~Wolverine growl~~ will pick your berries for you. You will come with ~~owl hoot~~ and me."

"Where are we going?"

"You will see when we get there. Now, give ~~wolverine growl~~ your bucket."

Reluctantly, Knuckledragger handed his bucket over to Crab Leg. What was going on? Knuckledragger had looked forward to the experience of picking berries with the adults, and was disappointed that this was not to be. Still, he was in a forest, experiencing all kinds of new sensations. He decided to look on the bright side and just be glad that the adults were allowing him to accompany them.

Crab Leg, One-Horn, and Little Shorty went off in various directions, gathering berries and other edibles in their buckets. The other three, however, went in a different direction altogether, heading deeper into the forest.

"There is much you need to know," said Scale-face as they walked. "Things that cannot be said in front of the orcs."

"What kind of things?" Knuckledragger wanted to know.

"The story of our heritage. The tale of our beginnings. The legend of our Hidden God."

Knuckledragger had not known that they had a god, hidden or otherwise. He well knew of Gruumsh, the one-eyed god of the orcs, as well as a few other, lesser gods his masters respected. But still—a god of the mongrelmen? Was such a thing possible?

"Long ago," Scale-face began, "our people were not as you see us now. They were smooth of skin and uniform in appearance, much as all orcs look like

orcs, or all humans look like humans. We were created by the Hidden God in that form and had magical powers: we were able to take on the shapes of other races. If you wished it, you could look like an orc, or an ogre, or an elf, merely by wishing it.

"But our ancestors angered the Hidden God, and he cursed them. Their children were born looking not like them, but like us, with bits of this creature and bits of that. Furthermore, they could not change their shape as their parents could, so they were forced to stay in the misshapen forms in which they were born. So it is today."

"What did they do to anger the Hidden God?"

"That, no one knows. But there is hope. Perhaps one day, the Hidden God will revoke his curse, and your children, or perhaps your children's children, will regain the power that is their birthright. Ah, we are here."

Knuckledragger looked around but saw nothing unusual. They had been walking through the forest and were now in another part of it. What made this part of the forest so special?

Then he saw it, as if a veil had been lifted from his eyes. That clump of trees over there, with the fallen branch—it was actually a small dwelling! Knuckledragger had looked right at it for several seconds without realizing what it was.⁵

"What is it?" he asked his father, his voice dropping to a whisper.

"This," replied Scale-face, "is the temple of the Hidden God."

A flap opened in the side of the structure, and an ancient mongrelman appeared from inside the temple. "Greetings ~~owl hoot~~, ~~lizard hiss~~. Is this your son?"

"Yes. ~~Robin chirp~~, this is ~~cricket song~~, the Priest of the Hidden God."

"Pleased to meet you, ~~cricket song~~,"⁶ said Knuckledragger, noting that the

priests right hand was covered in scales the same color as those on the left side of Scale-face's head. Perhaps it was because of this similarity between the elder priest and his father, but Knuckledragger took an instant liking to him.

"Come inside, ~~robin chirp~~. We have much to discuss."

"~~Owl hoot~~ and I will be back for you soon," said Scale-face, holding up his bucket and smiling. "We must fill these for the orcs, lest they grow suspicious." With that, he and Half-Human trudged away from the temple, leaving Knuckledragger and the priest by themselves.

Knuckledragger followed the priest through the camouflaged flap and inside the temple. It was dark and gloomy, but exciting to the young mongrelman, for it was a secret place of which his masters, the orcs, did not know.

"How long have you lived here?" Knuckledragger asked.

"Twelve years," replied the priest.

"Twelve years! How old are you?"

"Thirty-seven. There are a few good years left in me yet!" Knuckledragger's mouth dropped. He'd never heard of anyone living to be so old. Maybe the Hidden God gave his priests the gift of long life. Knuckledragger asked if this was so.

"No, no," chuckled the priest. "So far, the Hidden God has remained as hidden to me, his priest, as to anyone. He has given me no powers, granted me no visions, provided me with no spells. Given me absolutely no indication, in fact, that he's even there at all."⁷

"Is he?" asked Knuckledragger. "I mean, what if he's dead or something?"

"No, my son, gods cannot die. He is testing us, and we must be patient. He will present himself when he is ready, and not before."

"How long must we wait?"

"As long as it takes."

5. The mongrelman knack for camouflage is an instinctive one. Some sages speculate that it is a logical extension of their desire to hide away from others, a method by which the slow-moving mongrelmen can escape those who would do them harm. In any case, most mongrelmen are able to camouflage themselves in one turn with materials at hand—usually twigs, branches, leaves, dirt, and mud. The base chance of success for their camouflage is 80%, and this increases by 1% per additional turn devoted to the task (to an upper limit of 95%). Mongrelmen are not squeamish about disguising themselves, thinking nothing of rubbing mud all over their bodies if it helps.

In addition to themselves, mongrelmen can camouflage stationary items up to the size of small buildings, which are usually undetectable at ranges greater than 50'.

6. Perhaps because mongrelmen all tend to be on the lowest end of any social scale, they take pains not to have levels of status in their own society. All

mongrelmen call each other by their true names, regardless of station. Priests, elders, and even the leaders of free mongrelmen do without fancy titles—no "sir," "madam," or "my lord" is ever spoken by one mongrelman to another. Indeed, mongrelmen see each other as true equals, as perhaps only the lowest of the low can truly see themselves.

7. The sad reason for this is that the Hidden God does not exist. Rather, the legend of the Hidden God is a corrupted version of the mongrelmen's history, after being passed down verbally from generation to generation.

The Hidden God was actually an ancient wizard (whose name, alas, is lost to the ages) who, desiring a doppelganger-like race able to adapt the forms of others, created beings he called "infiltrators." The infiltrators were thin, wiry beings with large black eyes, who could absorb the genetic properties of beings whose flesh they consumed. Undergoing a ritual known as "the Feast," they would eat humanoid flesh, digest it in

specialized organs within their body, and thereafter be able to transform their bodies into copies of the humanoid forms on which they had feasted. Utilizing this ability, they were able to infiltrate many humanoid societies and serve as spies for the wizard.

However, the wizard unknowingly created the Infiltrators without the ability to breed true to their forms. The offspring of two infiltrators was always a misshapen humanoid form showing various, random features of the humanoid forms "feasted" upon by its parents. Thus was born the mongrelman race.

Alas, mongrelmen today still worship the Hidden God and pray for the day he will return them to their "days of glory." Each mongrelman society has a single Priest of the Hidden God (in slave societies, the priest is often as hidden as their god) whose duties are to pray for betterment of their lot in life. The Hidden God, of course, never answers these prayers, but the mongrelmen are a patient folk, and they are willing to wait.

Knuckledragger hid his disappointment. "So what do you do? As a priest, I mean."

"I pray, mostly. I pray for the Hidden God's forgiveness for whatever sins our forefathers committed. I pray for a return of the powers it is said our ancestors possessed. Mostly, I pray for the patience to continue on as I have for these thirty-seven long years."

"Why do you live out here, by yourself?"

The elder priest smiled down at Knuckledragger. "I could not live with you, among the orcs. The Priest of the Hidden God must devote his time to prayers and supplication, time I would not have as a slave. Here, I have all that I need: a small stream nearby for my water, forest plants in abundance for my food,⁸ and plenty of solitude in which to pray for our people."

"Cricket song? Could I ask you to say a prayer for my mother?"

"Of course, my child. What is your concern?"

"She's going to have a baby soon. Could you ask the Hidden God to see that the baby survives?"⁹

A look of pain flickered across the old priest's face for a fleeting moment. Then, in a voice full of weariness and hope, he said, "We will pray together."

Fidgeting in a torn leather bag that had been tossed into a corner, the priest pulled out an old piece of flint and steel, and worked his mismatched hands at starting a spark. After a few moments, he managed to light a yellowing taper candle and pulled back the curtain from a small

alcove cut into the wall. "Behold, the shrine of the Hidden God," he intoned.

The alcove, of course, was empty.

Nonetheless, he placed the candle in a notch before the alcove. Together, he and Knuckledragger prayed to their god for an intercession in the fate of Knuckledragger's unborn sibling. They were still kneeling in position before the empty altar when Scale-face and Half-Human returned.

"It's time to go, robin chirp," he said quietly.

Knuckledragger got up, thanked the priest, and walked back toward the forest's edge in silence with his father and his friend.

"You are quiet, robin chirp," Scale-face observed.

"Yes, I've been thinking. If the Hidden God returns our powers, what form will you take?"

"I don't think it will happen like that, my son."

"You don't?"

"No. The Hidden God took away the power not from the generation that angered him, but from their children. I'm sure that when he sees fit to return our power, it will be the same way. One day, our children will be born as they once were, and the race will be as it once was." He looked down at his son. "So do not waste time hoping to change your body someday.¹⁰ Accept it as the one you will have for the rest of your life, and move on to other things. Besides," he said, smiling "you're not particularly ugly."¹¹

They walked along in silence for awhile longer, then Knuckledragger

blurted out, "I think I would like to serve the Hidden God."

"You would? But, you're much too young to be a priest. Perhaps in fifteen or twenty years, when you're much older. Right now, you are a strong young man in the prime of your life. You are needed by the rest of the community.¹² Ah, here come the others."

Crab Leg, One-Horn, and Little Shorty came hobbling up from out of the forest. "Great news, lizard hiss! Frog croak found a dead body in the forest, of a species unknown to us! A small humanoid, with blue skin."

"How small?"

"Only about three feet, but we don't know if he was fully grown. We took his arm, just in case."

"Where is it?"

"Strapped to wolverine growl's leg." Crab Leg passed Knuckledragger's bucket back to him, now filled with hunks of mushrooms and tubers, and lifted up his rotting, filthy robe¹³ to show a small blue arm strapped to his inner leg by strips of cloth. He smiled, showing reptilian teeth. "We'll Feast tonight."¹⁴

"Come," said Scale-face. "We must not be late." Together, the six shambled off toward the orc fortress.

"Humph!" snorted Karg at their arrival, sounding as always, a bit disappointed that there'd be no torturing the hostages in retaliation for an escape attempt. As the mongrelmen shuffled single file back into the fort, he grabbed Scale-face by the shoulder. "You! Scale-face! Your woman is giving birth. You may go to her."

8. Mongrelmen are omnivorous. Free mongrelman grow fruits and vegetables and often supplement their diet with domestic game, partially because they tend to be below-average hunters. While many mongrelmen sport teeth designed for eating meat, they are perfectly happy living a vegetarian existence if necessary.

9. Another sad fact of mongrelman existence is their high infant mortality rate. Even in free mongrelmen societies, only about 50% of infants born live more than a week. In slave societies, where the mongrelmen live under much harsher conditions, the infant mortality rate can be as high as 80%. For this reason, a healthy baby mongrelman is a cause for great rejoicing. Mongrelmen have a stoic attitude toward those that don't survive; considering the lives they lead, they often consider them "the lucky ones."

10. Although appreciation of beauty is an important part of mongrelman society, and they have a fascination with polymorph magic, no mongrelman would willingly alter his appearance to hide his ugliness. Mongrelmen take their hideous appearance as a fact of life, something over which they have no control, and while their ugliness shames them and causes them to seek to hide from others, they nonetheless believe it is their duty as mongrelmen to remain in the forms in which they were born until the Hidden God deems otherwise. To take matters in their own hands, they fear, would anger their god and prevent him from returning their shapeshifting powers. No mongrelman would put the improvement of his own appearance ahead of the betterment of his entire race.

Incidentally, the mongrelman love of beauty is much deeper than that of most other races, perhaps because they themselves are so far removed from it. A mongrelman is just as able to find and appreciate beauty in the smooth, even features of a female goblin as in the most delicate elfen princess.

11. "You're not particularly ugly," is a high complement among mongrelmen. They are truthful enough not to insult each others' intelligence by calling one another "beautiful," and "not particularly ugly" is about as high as they can honestly go.

12. Call it fatalism, rationalization, or just simple realism, but mongrelmen, while insisting on having a priest (or priestess) of the Hidden God in every mongrelman community, tend to reserve the post for those elderly members of the community who are unable to work at jobs requiring heavy manual labor.

13. Mongrelmen tend to wear dirty, ragged clothing. Because of their oddly-shaped bodies they prefer their clothes to be loose, and robes (especially those with hoods that can conceal their faces) are popular among both sexes. Dirty clothes don't bother mongrelmen as they aid in their attempts at camouflage.

For similar reasons, mongrelmen have difficulty fitting into standard armor. Only rarely will a mongrelman be lucky enough to be able to fit into a set of armor; usually they must make do with bits and pieces of different types. Players with mongrelmen PCs who wish to wear armor should consult *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, page 111, for rules on piecemeal armor.

14. Mongrelmen today retain the ability to "feast." However, all "feasting" does is store the humanoid form in the mongrelman's genetic code and passes that form on to its offspring. Thus, a mongrelman with no ogreish features "feasts" upon a slain ogre's flesh. Later, when he mates, his children could end up with body parts resembling those of an ogre. Only humanoid forms from four to nine feet or so can be successfully "feasted" upon, so the mongrelman makeup will never include halflings or kobolds (too small) or giants (too big).

Mongrelmen continue to "feast" for many reasons. Some believe that the Hidden God requires it of mongrelmen so that when he restores their ability to shapechange, they will have that many more forms they can adopt. Others believe that only when a set number of humanoid forms have been "feasted" upon will the Hidden God restore their power. Some simply like the flavor of humanoid meat.

In any case, "feasting" is a private act that mongrelmen will not share with others not of their race. "Feasting" is always done in private, and not everyone in the mongrelman community will partake. Usually, only those who do not sport features of the humanoid to be "feasted" upon will take part, so that the flesh can be used only by those able to benefit from it. Children are not allowed to "feast" until they have been initiated into adult society and have learned the secret history of the mongrelmen and their Hidden God.

Scale-face passed his bucket of berries to Crab Leg and bowed before the orc guard. "Master, I thank you for your kindness," he said, then scurried off in the direction of the slave huts.¹⁵ Knuckledragger hid his concern and went with the others to prepare the food.

The next hour went by quickly, as Knuckledragger was caught up in the daily routine of his slavery. There was the food to prepare, the war-beasts to groom, the fires to be tended to, and the weapons to sharpen.¹⁶ Knuckledragger went about his duties in a daze, worried about his family, and thinking about his prayer to the Hidden God. Perhaps this will be the time, he thought. Perhaps my little brother or sister will be the first of the new race and be born with skin all the same color and texture. He was shaken from his reverie by Not Half Bad, a female mongrelman who was fortunate enough to

have predominantly orcish features on her face and most of one arm and leg. "Your mother and sister are fine, ~~rob in~~ ^{chip}. Perhaps you would like to see them."

Giving a silent prayer of thanks to the Hidden God, Knuckledragger hurried over to the ramshackle hut where his family lived. Entering the open doorway, he saw his mother, Frog Lips, lying back in exhaustion on the pile of damp straw that made up her bed. Scale-face was holding a small bundle in his arms, wrapped in the cleanest scraps of cloth to be found. Seeing his son, he smiled down at him. "You have a sister," he said softly, and lowered her so Knuckledragger could see. Silently pleading with the Hidden God, Knuckledragger looked at his new sister with a heart filled with hope.

She had green scales covering the top of her scalp and halfway down the right side of her head. The left half was

a sickly yellow, with large tan warts. Ogre-sized lips on the left side merged into human-sized lips on the right, giving her an artificial sneer. From the dark hair covering the back of her head, Knuckledragger sensed the same gnoll blood in her that was responsible for his own muzzle and left ear.

"What do you think?" asked Scale-face.

Knuckledragger looked up at his father, and smiled sadly. "She's not particularly ugly," he said, then turned to finish his chores.



Johnathan M. Richards says he's somewhat of a mongrel himself, being aware of English, German, Scottish, and American Indian (Potawatomi tribe) blood. So far, no shapeshifting abilities have manifested.

15. There is almost no end to the amount of abuse a mongrelman slave is willing to take. Among mongrelmen, mere survival is the greatest accomplishment one could hope for. They remain courteous and obedient to their masters no matter what the provocation, wishing only to avoid trouble. Sadly, this makes them excellent slave material, a fact not many humanoid tribes are liable to overlook.

16. Mongrelman passivity is so great that humanoid tribes need not fear allowing mongrel-

men access to weapons. There is no chance that the mongrelmen will use the weapon to try to free themselves from slavery in a bloody revolt, as such a concept is foreign to them. Many humanoid tribes even go so far as giving their mongrelmen slaves piecemeal armor and weapons and training them for battle, using them as "cannon fodder."

Mongrelmen can be trained to use just about any weapon, but prefer simple ones such as swords and clubs. Free mongrelmen often use blowguns;

besides being a simple weapon to make and use, it is silent and can be used by a camouflaged mongrelman without giving away his location. In addition, it is easier for a mongrelman to remain still and hidden and use a blowgun on prey that comes within range than to track and chase down prey, given the standard mongrelman's limping gait. The blowgun darts are usually coated in a mild poison that causes paralysis for 1d4 rounds unless a save vs. poison is made at +2.

Appendix: Designing a Mongrelman PC

With most PCs, the character's physical appearance is up to the player, who can decide such things as whether or not his PC is a blonde or a brunette and what color his eyes are. After all, such details don't usually make a difference in how the PC will be played, or alter any of his capabilities.

Unfortunately, the same does not hold true for the mongrelman PC, made available in *The Complete Book of Humanoids* (see pages 43-46). As its very name suggests, a mongrelman is made of differing body parts from a wide variety of creatures, and no two mongrelmen are apt to look anything like one another. The player wishing to run a mongrelman PC is going to have to know just what his character looks like before he can even decide on his character class. After all, some physical traits are going to hamper, if not preclude altogether, various career possibilities. A mongrelman with two crab claws in place of hands is not likely to have much of a future as a mage, if he can't

even perform the simplest of somatic gestures. Similarly, pickpocketing isn't likely to be possible to such a mongrelman; he'll probably end up as a warrior, and a pitiable one at that, as he'll be unable to wield the coveted magical swords and similar enchanted weapons a party is sure to encounter eventually.

A system is needed to generate the physical appearance of a given mongrelman. This appendix provides one way to do so, by means of **Table 1: The Random Mongrelman Appearance Generator**. It also gives some notes on what additional capabilities and detrimental attributes accompany the mongrelman's specific physical makeup. These notes should be useful even to those who opt not to randomly roll their PCs' appearances, but prefer to design them piece by piece themselves.

The "Mongrelman" entry in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*® rules states "mongrelmen are a mixture of the blood of many species: humans, orcs, gnolls, ogres, dwarves, hobgoblins, elves,

bugbears, bullywugs, and many others." Since the creatures specified range in size from 4' to over 9' in height, only humanoid creatures within that size range were added to the table, specifically, the crabman, goblin, lizard man, minotaur, and satyr. If DMs wish to add other creatures to this list, it is easy enough to modify the table to suit their individual campaign worlds.

Randomly Determining Your Mongrelman's Appearance

A mongrelman's body makeup is generally split into nine different areas, each of which might be patterned after a different creature. Each of a mongrelman's arms and legs tend to be predominantly patterned after a single creature, while the head and torso are usually an amalgamation of several different creatures blending into each other. A diagram of these areas appears as **Illustration 1**. Mongrelman bodies are seldom symmetrically divided; often the torso body type might run partway

Table 1: Random Mongrelman Appearance Generator

	(A/B/C) Head	(D/E) Torso	(F/G) Arm	(H/I) Leg	Height
Bugbear	01-10	01-10	01-05	01-05	7'
Bullywug	11-20	11-15	06-10	06-15	4'-7'
Crabman	21-25	16-20	11-25	16-25	7'-10'
Dwarf	26-30	21-25	26-30	26-30	4'+
Elf	31-35	26-30	31-35	31-35	5'+
Gnoll	36-45	31-40	36-45	36-45	7.5'
Goblin	46-50	41-45	46-55	46-50	4'
Hobgoblin	51-60	46-55	56-60	51-55	6.5'
Human	61-65	56-60	61-65	56-60	6'
Lizard Man	66-75	61-70	66-75	61-70	7'
Minotaur	76-80	71-75	76-80	71-80	7.5'
Ogre	81-85	76-80	81-85	81-85	9'+
Orc	86-95	81-90	86-95	86-90	6'
Satyr*	96-00	91-00	96-00	91-00	5'

*Since only male satyrs exist, only male mongrelmen can have satyr body parts. If rolling up a female mongrelman, reroll any results that indicate a satyr's body part.

down an arm or leg, or a patch of flesh on the head might continue partway down the mongrelman's back, but the diagram is close enough to permit close approximations of individual mongrelmen's physical makeup.

Roll percentile dice on the table above for each of the nine areas of the mongrelman's body, recording the results on the diagram in **Illustration 1**.

Once the rolls from **Table 1** have been made and recorded, it only remains to determine the specific oddities of your mongrelman's physiognomy. Roll 1d10 and compare that number to **Table 2**. This shows how many quirks your mongrelman character has. Finally, roll d% on **Table 3** to determine the specific quirks, rerolling any duplications.

If, when rolling up a specific quirk, you get a result which isn't a change to the mongrelman (for instance, rolling lizard man teeth when your PC already rolled up a lizard man snout for area C), reroll the specific result but not the quirk itself. In the example above, the player would reroll on the **head** column until he got teeth that didn't match those already in his PC's mouth.

Once the mongrelman's features have been decided upon, the player must determine if his character has any special physical abilities or disadvantages due to his body's unique physiognomy. The following characteristics are possible:

Bite damage. Mongrelmen with the mouth of a minotaur may choose to bite in melee for 1-2 hp damage. Those with lizard man snouts may bite for 1-6. Merely having a few minotaur or lizard man teeth does not qualify the mongrelman for bite damage.

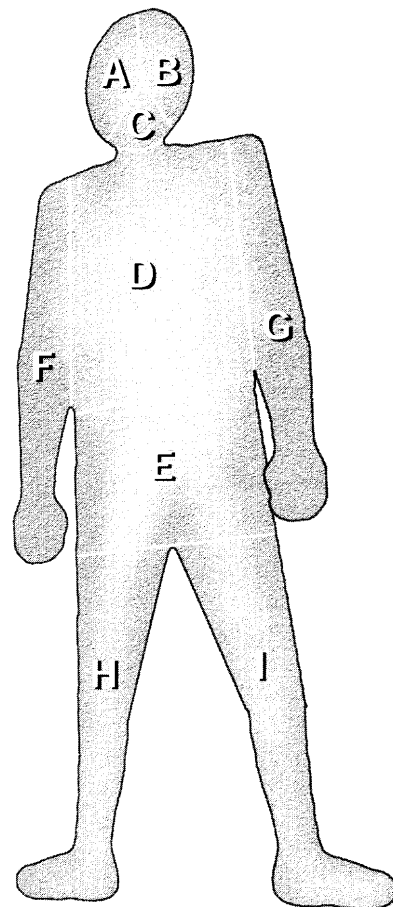
Claw damage. Mongrelmen with the claws of a lizard man can attack for 1-2 hp damage. Those born with a crabman's claw can cause 1-6 hp damage, but this ability comes at a cost—the claw's rigidity prevents the mongrelman from casting spells requiring intricate somatic gestures and hampers thieving skills such as picking pockets and opening locks. A mongrelman with one crabman claw has only a base 40% chance of successfully picking a pocket (instead of the standard 70% mongrelman ability); those with two drop down to a mere 10% chance. For these reasons, mongrelmen with crabman claws often become warriors.

Dry skin. Those mongrelmen with body parts of either a lizard man or a bullywug must moisten those areas at least once every 24 hours or suffer the effects of a half-power *irritation* spell (-2 AC and -1 to hit) until they can do so.

Extra limb. Those mongrelmen with a partial crabman torso might have one of the crabman's smaller arms (player's option). Only one extra arm is possible, unless both of the die rolls for the mongrelman's torso resulted in "crabman," in which case two extra arms are possible. These extra arms are capable of fine manipulation, adding +5% per additional arm to the mongrelman's ability to pick pockets in certain circumstances. (The arms must be free to move, not hidden under layers of clothing.)

Flexible eyestalk. Mongrelmen with a crabman's eyestalk can move it in all directions, making it easier to peek over a wall, around a corner, and so on. If severed, an eyestalk grows back in about a week.

Illustration 1



- A = right eye, right ear
- B = left eye, left ear
- C = mouth, nose
- D = chest, upper back
- E = stomach, waist, lower back, tail (if any)
- F = right arm, right hand
- G = left arm, left hand
- H = right leg, right foot
- I = left leg, left foot

Table 2: Number of Quirks**Roll 1d100**

1-6	One quirk
7-9	Two quirks
10	Three quirks

Horn Butt. A mongrelman with the horn of either a minotaur or satyr can butt for 1-4 hp damage. This is less damage than a satyr or minotaur causes, but mongrelmen are generally not in as good physical condition, nor can they generate the speed necessary for a really good head-butting. In no case can a horned mongrelman cause charging damage.

Infravision. A mongrelman will have 60' infravision, if he has at least one eye from one or more of the following creatures: bugbear, dwarf, elf, goblin, hobgoblin, minotaur, orc, or satyr. Many mongrelmen with infravision possess it in only one eye, although this doesn't seem to hamper them much.

Light Sensitivity. Mongrelmen with at least one goblin or orc eye have a sensitivity to bright lights, including normal daylight. They strike at -1 to hit when in bright sunlight or its equivalent.

Lizard Man Lungs. Mongrelmen with the upper torso (area D) of a lizard man are able to hold their breath for 2/3 of their Constitution scores (rounded up), as opposed to the standard 1/3.

Ogre Strength. A mongrelman with the arm of an ogre has a +1 to hit and +2 to damage with weapons wielded in that hand. The bonuses are not as high as those enjoyed by full-blooded ogres, but this reflects the fact that only the mongrelman's arm is that strong, not the rest of his body.

Reduced Movement. Compare the height of the two creatures indicated when the rolls were made for the mongrelman's legs (as indicated by the height column on **Table 1**). If there is a 2' or more difference, the mongrelman's movement rate drops down to 6 as a result of the difference in leg length. Furthermore, he will move with an awkward, limping gait.

Tail. Those mongrelmen with a torso (area E) of lizard man or satyr heritage often have tails. Satyr tails are of normal size; lizard man tails tend to be shorter than those of true lizard man tails, and cannot be used in melee in any fashion. However, they can make disguising the mongrelman as a normal humanoid more difficult.

Tracking ability. Only those mongrelmen with the nose of a minotaur have

this ability; those who do can track creatures by their scent with a 50% probability of success.

Any special abilities or disadvantages should be noted on the mongrelman's character sheet.

Other physical traits can be obtained from examining the MONSTROUS MANUAL descriptions of the various creatures whose body parts make up the mongrelman. These won't add any extra abilities (one shouldn't, for instance, try arguing that because his mongrelman PC has minotaur features on his head, he is immune to *maze* spells), but they can provide some interesting details about the character. As an example, ogres have purple eyes with white pupils, while hobgoblin eyes are yellowish or dark brown. A mongrelman with one eye of each type will definitely look distinctive.

Little features like these can also be helpful when naming the mongrelman, or at least when deriving his "slave name." Generically insulting names ("Ugly," "Lumpy," "Freakface") are most often used in cases where the mongrelman is the only one of its kind in the group; even a crude tribe of orcs has to use a bit more imagination when dealing with mongrelmen in any numbers. In such cases, the "slave names" tend to be a bit more descriptive ("Clawhand," "Eyestalk," "Furface"), if only to keep the individual mongrelmen straight.

Choosing Your Mongrelman's Appearance

The other way of determining your mongrelman PC's appearance is simply to pick and choose body parts. The DM must approve of any "hand-picked" mongrelman body design in the interests of game balance, ensuring that the mongrelman doesn't have too many advantages without "paying for them" with disadvantages. For instance, a mongrelman with two ogre arms, a minotaur's bite attack and tracking ability, 60' infravision (due to one dwarven and one human eye, bypassing light sensitivity) and two extra-manipulative crab arms is pushing the limits of fair play. A good rule of thumb might be a disadvantage for every two advantages, just to keep up game balance. Remember, you're role-playing a misshapen creature ashamed of its deformed body, not a superhuman powerhouse!

**Table 3: Quirks****Roll 1d100**

01-10	<i>Different eye</i> (roll again on the head column, this eye replaces the one in area A or area B)
11-20	<i>Different ear</i> (roll again on the head column, this ear replaces the one in area A or area B)
21-35	<i>Odd patch of skin</i> (roll again on the torso column, this roughly 3" patch of skin is located on the head, torso, arm or leg)
36-45	<i>Additional head area</i> (roll again on the head column, splitting one of the head areas into two smaller areas—A becomes A1/A2, B becomes B1/B2, or C becomes C1/C2)
46-55	<i>Additional torso area</i> (roll again on the torso column, splitting one of the torso areas vertically into two smaller areas—D becomes D1/D2 or E becomes E1/E2)
56-65	<i>Additional arm area</i> (roll again on the arm column, this new area runs from the shoulder to the elbow—F becomes F1/F2 or G becomes G1/G2)
66-75	<i>Additional leg area</i> (roll again on the leg column, this new area runs from the hip to the knee—H becomes H1/H2 or I becomes I1/I2)
76-80	<i>Different back</i> (roll again for torso , this applies only to the mongrelman's back)
81-85	<i>Different teeth</i> (roll again on torso column: 1-4 teeth are of new type instead of what was originally rolled for area C)
86-90	<i>Different fingers</i> (roll again on arm column, 1-3 fingers are of new type instead of what was originally rolled for F or G)
91-95	<i>Different toes</i> (roll again on leg column, 1-3 toes are of new type instead of what was originally rolled for H or I)
96-00	<i>Tail</i> (satyr or lizard man, 50% chance of either)

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Mongrelman, Infiltrator

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare (possibly extinct)
ORGANIZATION:	Small groups
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	See below
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	4
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Shapechange
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	270

Much as dopplegangers, infiltrators were (and possibly still are) created by wizards as servitors. They have the ability to shapechange into various humanoid forms, but their original form is that of an emaciated, hairless being with a somewhat oversized head. Large black eyes cover nearly half of the face, which has no discernible nose and only a thin slit of a mouth. Skin color tends to be a dusty white.

Combat: Infiltrators can adopt a variety of humanoid forms (see "Ecology" for details). While in their natural forms they can attack only with a weapon, but infiltrators spend time practicing armed combat and are usually proficient in a wide variety of combat arms. In addition, some of the shapes they can adopt provide them with natural combat abilities, such as a lizard man's claw/claw/bite routine. Infiltrators have all of the natural combat abilities of whatever form they adopt, with the exception of skills which must be learned (such as proficiency with a flind's flindbar or a lizard king's great trident). When wearing a different humanoid's form, they gain that creature's armor class and hit dice (add 4 hp per additional hit die of the assumed form—these "extra" hit points are the first lost in combat, and disappear when the infiltrator reverts to its normal form). An infiltrator assuming the form of a humanoid with fewer hit dice retains its own hit points.

Habitat/Society: Created by wizards, infiltrators live to serve them in the role of spy, messenger, and occasionally interpreter. All infiltrators have an innate ability to comprehend languages that they hear, and can speak those languages as well. Infiltrators are fiercely loyal to the wizards that create them, treating them with a devotion often reserved only for the divine. An infiltrator whose wizard is slain often seeks out a new wizard to serve, for it is service to a master of the magical arts that an infiltrator feels secure.

Infiltrators generally have no treasure of their own, as any that they acquire is turned over immediately to their masters. However, because of the infiltrators' devotion, wizards often entrust them with the use of magical weapons or helpful items. Infiltrators can use any magical items usable by warriors.

Ecology: Infiltrators have an adaptable set of vocal cords, allowing them to speak just about any language they hear. They also have the ability to absorb genetic material through the flesh they consume. This process, called "feasting," allows the infiltrator to break down the organic material in a separate stomach-like organ and use the genetic material gained therein to restructure their own bodies into a perfect physical simulacrum of the type of humanoid whose flesh they consumed. Gender has no bearing in the flesh being "feasted" upon; a male infiltrator "feasting upon the flesh of a female hobgoblin could thereafter shapechange into a male hobgoblin. He could not, however, become a female hobgoblin, as gender remains a constant no matter what form is assumed. Additionally, the assumed form will not be an exact replica of the being "feasted" upon—an infiltrator cannot pose as the specific individual whose flesh he ate, merely as a member of the same race. Only the genetic material of humanoid races from 4' to 9' can be successfully "feasted" upon, as these are the size limits of the infiltrators' shapechanging abilities. Animal forms or humanoids outside the size limits listed above cannot be adopted.

Once "feasting" is complete (the process takes about an hour), the infiltrator can thereafter assume the form of that type of humanoid. Shapechanging into a new form takes a single round and heals the infiltrator of 1d4 hp damage. Naturally, it is in the infiltrators best interests to "feast" upon as great a variety of humanoids as he can, in order to widen the selection of forms he can adopt.

Shapechanging affects only the infiltrators body, not his clothing or armor. For this reason, infiltrators prefer to wear no clothing while in their natural forms. (They have no taboo against nudity, probably because male and female infiltrators are virtually indistinguishable while in their natural forms.) Once taking on an assumed form, they will usually don clothing, armor, and weapons appropriate to that form.

The biggest drawback to an infiltrator's life is its inability to pass on its characteristics to its next generation. Infiltrators cannot bear young with other species, even when assuming their forms, and the offspring of two infiltrators is always a mongrelman, bearing the physical characteristics of the various types of humanoids upon which the infiltrators had previously "feasted."

The original infiltrators have long since died out, leaving behind the mongrelmen as their only legacy. However, it is possible that the secrets to the creation of the infiltrator race might someday be rediscovered (if it hasn't been already) or independently researched by some wizard exploring the possibilities of magical shapeshifting.



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In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

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If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 204-7226 (U.S.A.).

- ❖ Australian convention
- * Canadian convention
- ⊗ European convention

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JANUARY CONVENTIONS

Georgecon
January 2-4 1998 **MO**
 Stafford Inn, St. Louis, MO.
 Guests: Jerry Rector (Star of the new *Star Trek* series *The Privateers*), Ray Greer (Champions*, *Fuzion**, and other RPGs), Rick Loomis (President & Founder of *Flying Buffalo*), and Matt Faileigh (former President of Society of Ancients and Game retailer). Events: four major *Magic** tournaments, countless RPG events; two *Warhammer** Tournaments; *Warhammer 40K** tournament; *Necromunda** Demos and tournament, *Vampire** LARP, Super hero LARP, tons of anime, masquerade ball, filking, etc. Contact Georgecon c/o NHGG P.O. Box 398 Gerald, MO 65066. Email ike96@fidnet.com

Crusades '98
January 16-18, 1998 CT
 Quality Inn Conference Center, New Haven, CT
 Events: Board Games, Miniature Wargaming, Board Games, CCGs, Painting Contest, Seminars. For more information contact the Connecticut Game Club, P.O. Box 403, Fairfield, CT 06430-0403. Email quillup@concentric.net.

FEBRUARY CONVENTIONS

Winter War XXV
February 6-8 **IL**
 The Chancellor Hotel, Champaign, IL. Events: *Magic*, *Vampire*, AD&D, *Call of Cthulhu**, Hero System, *Warhammer**, *GURPS**, Larp, historical games, miniatures, board games, *Star Fleet Battles**, and more. Contact: Donald E. McKinney, 304 W. Sherman Box 1012, St. Joseph, IL 61873. Email winterwar@prairienet.org.

DunDraCon
February 13-16 **CA**
 Marriott Hotel, San Ramon, CA. Events: 150+ convention-sponsored RPGs, seminars on gaming, CCGs and board game tournaments, miniatures games, SCA rooms with seminars, displays and demos, large dealer room, flea market, figure painting contest, video arcade room and lots of open gaming. Registration: \$30. Contact DunDraCon, 1145 Talbot Ave, CA 94706. Email ashland@ccnet.com.

Total Confusion
February 19-22 **MA**
 Ramada Rolling Green Hotel, Andover, MA. Events include roleplaying, board, and card games. Contact

Total Confusion, P.O. Box 403, N. Clemsford, MA 01863. Email mikechambers@juno.com.

Con of the North
February 20-22 **MN**
 Radisson Hotel, Downtown St. Paul. Events: collectable card, roleplaying, live-action, computer network, and board games. Contact P.O. Box 18096, Minneapolis, MN 55418. Email cotn@omnifarious.org. Website <http://www.real-time.com/~cotn>.

SheVaCon
February 27-March 1 **VA**
 Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Guests: C.S. Friedman and Larry Elmore. Events: art show and sale, 24-hour gaming, live-action roleplaying, *Vampire*. Contact SheVaCon, P.O. Box 2672, Staunton VA 24402. Email drgnshrd@rica.net

Jaxcon '98
February 20-22 **FL**
 Ramada Inn on Arlington Blvd., Jackson, FL. Events: roleplaying, card, and miniatures games. Other activities: an AD&D tournament, sanctioned *Magic* tournament, *Vampire* LARP, dealer's room, and flea market. Registration \$20/weekend until Jan. 1; afterward \$25 for weekend, \$15 for Fri/Sat. Contact: Jaxcon, P.O. Box 14218, Jacksonville, FL 32228-4218. Email Jaxcon@usa.nrrer.

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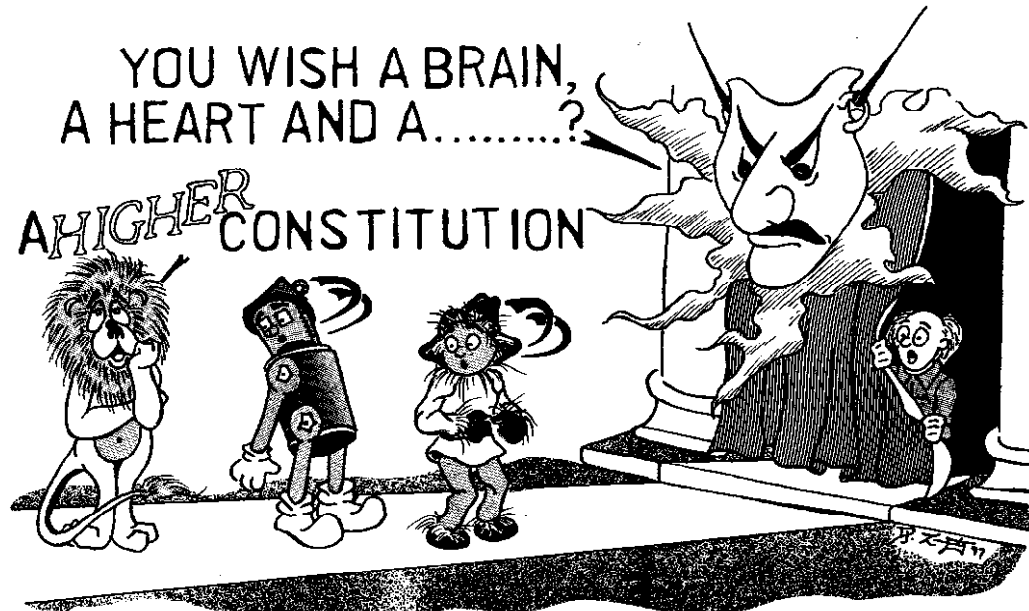
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Winter Fantasy '98
February 26-March 1 IL

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By David Zawitaz



MARCH CONVENTIONS

MegaCon '98

March 13-15 FL

Expo Center, Orlando FL.
 Guests: Julie Bell, John Byrne, Tony Daniel, Joseph M. Linsner, George Perez, Don Rosa, William Tucci, Boris Vallejo, Mark Waid, and Steve Bryant. Events: role-playing, RPGA Network, miniatures gaming, comic book artists, CCGs, anime, LARP, comics, and gaming dealers Room. Other activities: board gaming, fantasy art show and auction. Contact: P.O. Box 3120, Winter Park, FL 32790. Email megacon98@aol.com. Website <http://www.blueearthpress.com/megacon/>.

AggieCon XXIX

March 26-29 TX

Texas A&M University.
 Guests: Robert Asprin, Kerry O'Quinn, Joe R. Lansdale, Thomas Knowles, Darlene Bolesney. Events: dealer's room, art show, panels, gaming, charity auction, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, masquerade ball; costume contest, 24-hour anime room. Contact:

Texas A&M University, MSC Student Programs Box J-1, College Station, TX 77844. Email aggiecon@msc.tamu.edu. Website <http://cepheid.tamu.edu/aggiecon>.

Egyptian Campaign '98

March 27-29 IL

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL. Events: RPGA Network events, AD&D game, *Shadowrun*, *Battletech*, *Warhammer 40K*, *Empire Builder**, *Diplomacy**, *Axis & Allies**, *Magic*, *Star Fleet Battles*, *Car Wars**, and many other board, miniature, card, and roleplaying games. Contact: Egyptian Campaign 1990, c/o S.I.U.C. Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Third Floor Student Center, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425. Email ECGamCon@aol.com. Website: <http://www.siu.edu/~gamesoc>.



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total paid/requested circulation	48,951	44,163
Free distribution by mail	181	194
Free distribution outside the mail	235	241
Total free distribution	416	435
Total distribution	49,367	44,598
Copies not distributed Office use, leftovers	2,036	3,208
Return from news agents	1,311	1194
Total	52,714	49,000
Percent paid/requested circulation	99%	99%

OKAY, YOU SUDDENLY EMERGE FROM THE DENSE JUNGLE TO FIND YOURSELVES IN A SMALL CLEARING. IN THE CENTER OF THE CLEARING IS A BEAUTIFUL TEMPLE. IT'S CONSTRUCTED OF RED AND BLACK MARBLE. I CAN'T CONVEY JUST HOW BEAUTIFUL YOUR CHARACTERS FIND THE SIGHT. THE AFTERNOON SUN REFLECTING OFF THE HIGHLY POLISHED STONE GIVES THE ENTIRE BUILDING A WARM, SOUL-STIRRING AURA. AS YOU STAND THERE IN AWE, YOU REALIZE THAT THIS MUST BE THE FABLED TEMPLE OF KAZAAR-FREEM, GOD OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY!

THIS SUCKS! WE CHOPPED THROUGH SIXTY MILES OF DENSE JUNGLE JUST TO FIND SOME CRAPPY TEMPLE!

LET'S TORCH IT!

I BOW, EXPRESSING MY HUMILITY, AWE, AND OVERWHELMING RESPECT!

I'M WITH SARA! I'M BOWING WITH HUMILITY AND ALL THAT OTHER CRAP AS WELL!



GOOD JOB, SARA AND BRIAN! GAZZAR-KREE, THE HALF-BIRD-HALF-MAN AGENT TO KAZAAR-FREEM, IMMEDIATELY APPEARS BEFORE YOU. HE KISSES BOTH OF YOU ON THE FOREHEAD, BLESSING YOU!

WHOA, GAZZAR-DUDE! HOW ABOUT LAYING SOME OF THAT BLESSING STUFF OVER HERE?

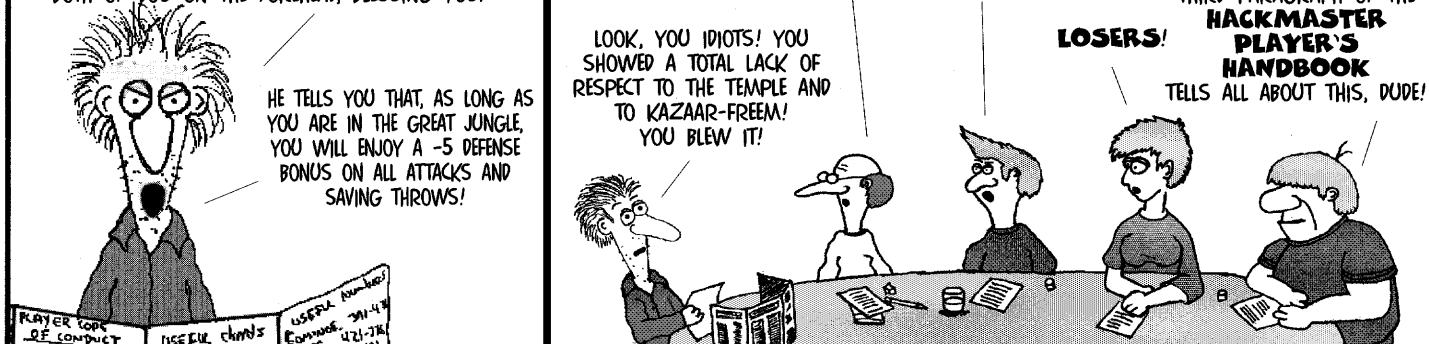
YEAH! WHAT GIVES? ARE WE INVISIBLE? WHY DIDN'T WE GET BLESSED?

YOU SHOULD HAVE READ UP ON YOUR DUTIES. PAGE 34, SECOND COLUMN, THIRD PARAGRAPH OF THE HACKMASTER PLAYER'S HANDBOOK TELLS ALL ABOUT THIS, DUDE!

HE TELLS YOU THAT, AS LONG AS YOU ARE IN THE GREAT JUNGLE, YOU WILL ENJOY A -5 DEFENSE BONUS ON ALL ATTACKS AND SAVING THROWS!

LOOK, YOU IDIOTS! YOU SHOWED A TOTAL LACK OF RESPECT TO THE TEMPLE AND TO KAZAAR-FREEM! YOU BLEW IT!

LOSERS!



GAZZAR-KREE TELLS YOU THAT YOU CAN REGAIN THE FAVOR OF KAZAAR-FREEM AND RECEIVE A BLESSING BY SACRIFICING 5,000 GOLD PIECES ON THE TEMPLE ALTAR!

5,000 GOLD PIECES? HE CAN KISS MY ROSY-RED DWARVEN BUTT!

THE NERVE OF THIS JERK! PEDDLING BLESSINGS, IS HE? I HAVE A GOOD MIND TO WASTE HIM WHERE HE STANDS!

OH, THIS IS GOING TO BE GREAT! I SAW IT COMING!

GAZZAR-KREE IS FURIOUS! "NEVER HAVE I BEEN SO INSULTED!" HE ROARS. "TO INSULT ME IS TO INSULT KAZAAR-FREEM HIMSELF! A CURSE UPON THE TWO OF YOU! FOR AS LONG AS YOU RESIDE IN THE GREAT JUNGLE, YOU WILL RECEIVE A -10 MODIFIER ON ALL YOUR ATTACKS! AND THOSE WHO ATTACK YOU WILL RECEIVE A +10 BONUS AGAINST YOU!"



ENOUGH TALK! THROW DOWN SOME DICE, BIRD-BOY! I'M GONNA MOP THE JUNGLE FLOOR WITH YOUR FACE!!

RATTLE! RATTLE!!

TWENTY MINUTES LATER

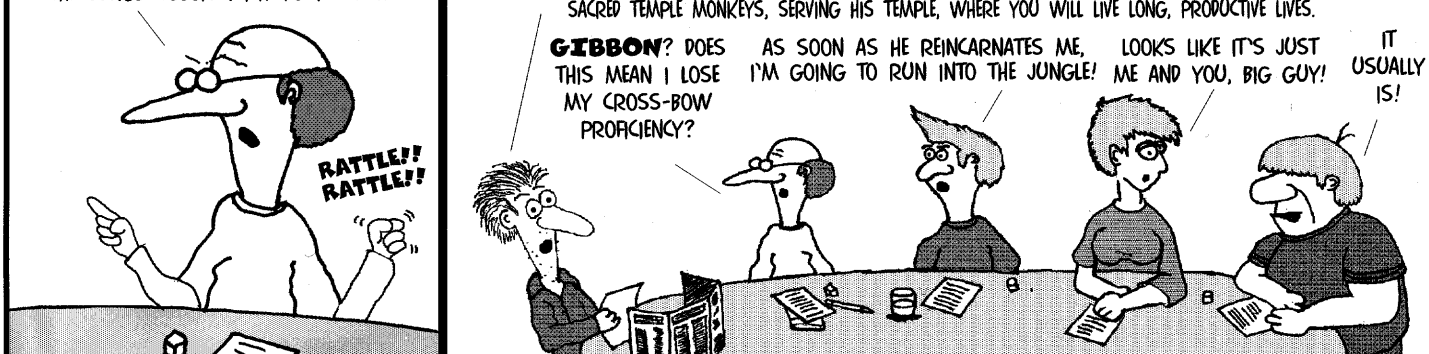
KAZAAR-FREEM HAS BOTH OF YOUR SOULS TRAPPED IN A GOLDEN COCONUT SHELL! SINCE HE IS THE GOD OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY, HE IS GOING TO BE MERCIFUL. HE REINCARNATES YOU AS GIBBONS, AND YOU BECOME SACRED TEMPLE MONKEYS, SERVING HIS TEMPLE, WHERE YOU WILL LIVE LONG, PRODUCTIVE LIVES.

GIBBON? DOES THIS MEAN I LOSE MY CROSS-BOW PROFICIENCY?

AS SOON AS HE REINCARNATES ME, I'M GOING TO RUN INTO THE JUNGLE!

LOOKS LIKE IT'S JUST ME AND YOU, BIG GUY!

IT USUALLY IS!



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DragonMirth

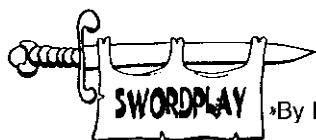
By Steamy



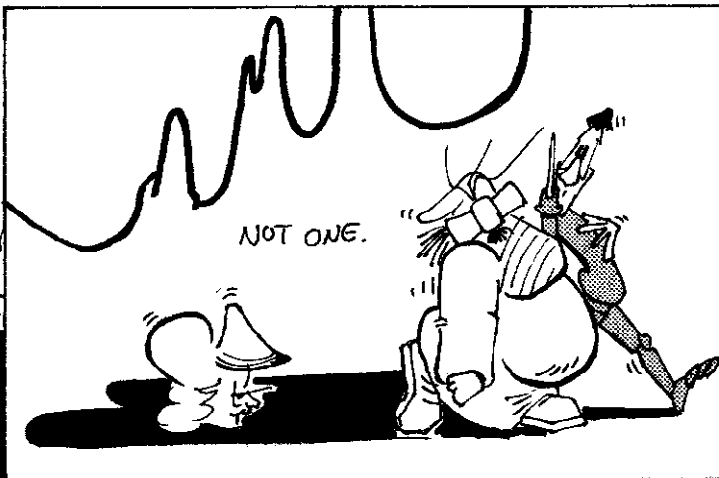
"SORRY, HERSHEL. I GUESS THE OTHER PLAYERS DIDN'T WANT A NINJA MASTER WITH SIX ARTIFACTS, A PERYTON MOUNT, AND THIRTY POTIONS IN THEIR FOURTH-LEVEL GAME."

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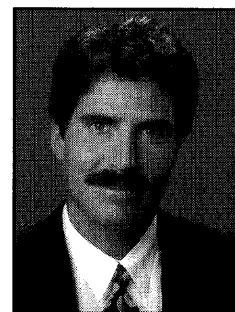
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FLOYD

Written
and
Illustrated by
Simon Williams



MY LIFE IS
A FAILURE...

AND NOW I
FACE ETERNITY
AS HALF A
BEING...



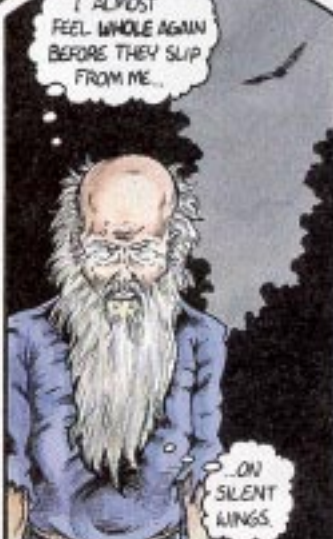
MY ATTEMPT
AT GODHOOD
FRACTURED MY
MIND AS WELL
AS MY BODY...

...AND I LET
MY CHANCE AT
REUNIFICATION
SLIP AWAY.



THE BOY,
ALVIN KETHORN, WHOSE
BODY I... ABSORBED... 80
YEARS AGO, HOLDS SO
MANY OF MY MEMORIES

THE FEW SNITCHES
OF MY MIND THAT
I RETAIN ARE AS
FLEETING AS A RAVEN
AT TWILIGHT...



I ALMOST
FEEL WHOLE AGAIN
BEFORE THEY SLIP
FROM ME...

...ON SILENT
WINGS.



THUD!



UHHH...

SENSELESS
CRUELTY DOES
TAKE THE EDGE
OFF A BIT...



IT'S BITTERLY
IRONIC THAT I SHOULD
COME TO THIS.

AFTER FOUR CENTURIES
OF USING THE LIVES OF
OTHERS TO PROLONG MY OWN,
I'VE BECOME TRAPPED IN
THIS WEAKENING, ROTTING
HUSK... AND I FEAR THAT
NO MATTER HOW WEAK IT
BECOMES, I WON'T BE
ALLOWED TO EXPIRE.

ALVIN WAS THE LAST ONE I'D TAKEN...

I SPIRITED HIM AWAY FROM CLEFT
WHEN HE WAS BUT A TODDLER.

I USED SORCERY TO ERASE ALVIN'S MEMORIES OF CLEFT, AND I CONVINCED HIM THAT HE WAS AN ORPHAN, AS WELL AS MY APPRENTICE.



I TRAINED HIM IN THE BASICS OF MAGIC...



...SO HE COULD HELP IN EXTENDING MY LIFE

FOR I WAS A SUMMRE CED'IN; MY BRACERS HAD MADE IT DIFFICULT TO MAGICALLY DRAIN THE LIFE FROM OTHERS. THEIR SPELL RESTRAINTS WERE A THORN IN MY SIDE!



ALVIN WOULD SOLVE BOTH PROBLEMS. HIS LIMITED TRAINING IN MAGECRAFT MADE HIS BRAIN A BIT MORE RECEPTIVE...

...TO MY ESSENCE!!



I USED EVERY MEAGER DRAUGHT OF POWER THAT THE BRACERS WOULD PERMIT TO TRANSFER MY MIND INTO ALVIN'S BODY... PERMANENTLY.

THE RITUAL SUCCEEDED! I HAD A YOUNG BODY, MY CENTURIES OF MAGICAL KNOWLEDGE, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY...



FREEDOM FROM THOSE ACCURSED ARMBANDS!

I MASTERED ANCIENT MAGIC UNSEEN FOR MILLENNIA! CONFIDENT IN MY SUPREMACY, I HATCHED A PLAN TO CONTROL THE GREAT SEAL OF RANQA, AND THEREBY RULE ALL MAGIC. EVEN FOR ONE AS POWERFUL AS I HAD BECOME, THIS WAS NO SMALL FEAT. THE PREPARATIONS TOOK DECADES.



AS I AGED, I EVEN ACQUIRED ANOTHER POTENTIAL BODY, JUST IN CASE.



ALSO, I HATED DOING THE DISHES...

TIME GREW SHORT AS I READIED MY ASSAULT.



BUT THE SUMMRE CED'IN HAD DISCOVERED MY PLANS.

THEIR DISRUPTION OF MY SPELLS DESTROYED MY TOWER.



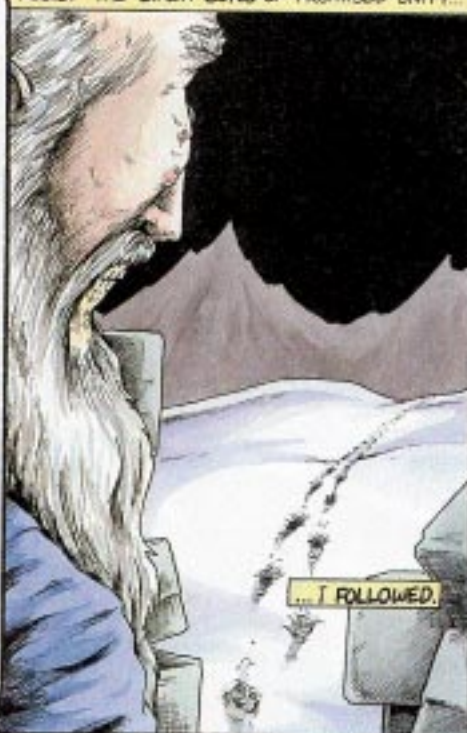
THE CHAOTIC ENERGY BLAST ALSO FRAGMENTED ME. ALVIN WAS WRENCHED FROM MY BEING.

HOW MUCH TIME PASSED BEFORE I REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS REMAINS UNKNOWN. I FOUND MYSELF WITH INCOMPLETE MEMORIES AND A BODY THRUST INTO UNLIFE.



I COULD FEEL ALVIN NEARBY. THE PIECES OF MY MIND HE CARRIED CALLED OUT TO ME, ALLOWING ME TO KNOW HIS LOCATION.

BUT FLOYD HAD MADE OFF WITH HIM. UNABLE TO RESIST THE SIREN SONG OF PROMISED UNITY...



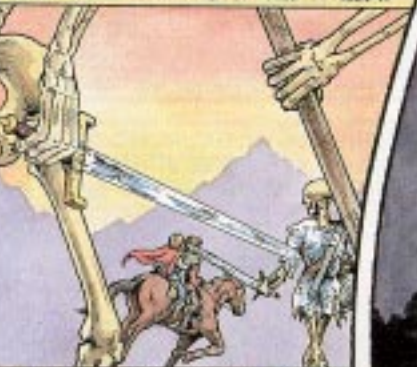
I FOLLOWED.

I FOUND ALVIN ABOUT TO BECOME PREY TO SOME BRAINLESS ORCS.



DISPATCHING THEM WAS CHILD'S PLAY, BUT ALVIN ESCAPED DURING OUR BATTLE.

I THEN USED THE BONES OF MY VICTIMS TO SEIZE ALVIN FROM THE VILLAGE OF CLEFT.



ONCE AGAIN, ALVIN HAD HELP, AND HE SLIPPED AWAY.



IF ONLY I HAD MY WHOLE SELF FOR A MOMENT, I COULD TELEPORT RIGHT TO HIM, BUT ALVIN HAS THAT SPELL LOCKED AWAY IN HIS BRAIN, ALONG WITH SO MUCH OF ME.

SIGH. THIS FOREST IS LIKELY TO BE MY GRAVE. HOW DEMEANING. I HEAR THAT OLD FART ACERERAK BUILT ONE MOTHER OF A TOMB TO SPEND HIS UNLIFE IN. I ALWAYS MEANT TO LOOK HIM UP.

THE ENERGY I USED TO RE-ANIMATE THOSE CORPSES COST ME DEARLY. I FELT THE ENERGY THAT DRIVES THIS BODY BEGIN TO FADE. I STILL FEEL ITS DECLINE.

I CAN STILL SENSE ALVIN'S THOUGHTS. HE CALLS HIMSELF 'MELVIN' NOW, NO DOUBT BECAUSE OF MY MEMORIES MIXING WITH HIS... IF ONLY.





Roleplaying

Reviews

Fantasy Sourcebooks
Ripe for the Plundering

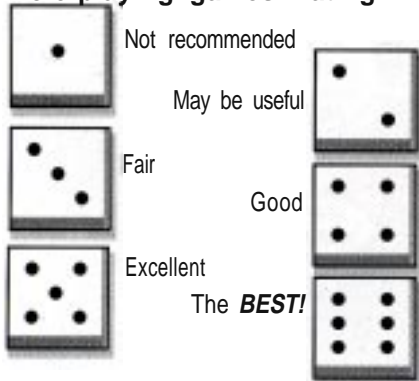
© 1997 Rick Swan

Keeping my AD&D® campaign fresh isn't easy, and it seems I'm always scrambling for ideas. Official AD&D sourcebooks remain my resource of choice, but they don't always fill the bill. Why? Well, sometimes, new ones aren't

published as often as I'd like. (My campaign devours material like a shark devours raw meat; we've been known to go through two or three sourcebooks' worth of stuff in the space of a month.) And sometimes, my players read new sourcebooks before I get the chance to use them in my campaign, thus spoiling any potential surprises. I suspect that a lot of gamemasters—regardless of whether they're AD&D players or aficionados of other game systems—share the same frustrations.

So where else to go for campaign material? Well, how about sourcebooks written for RPGs other than Your Favorite Game (be it AD&D or whatever)? All you have to do is steal—er, borrow—the concepts you like, adapt them to Your Favorite Game, and no one will be the wiser. To get you started, here's a stack of contenders, ripe for the plundering.

Role-playing games' rating



Old Ones

Palladium Fantasy RPG*
game supplement
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book

Palladium Books \$20

Design: Kevin Siembieda

Editing: James A. Osten and Julius
Rosenstein

Illustrations: Scott Johnson, Dave
Carson, Martin McKenna, Ramon Perez,
Michael Kucharski, and Kevin
Siembieda

Cover: Martin McKenna

Dragons & Gods

Palladium Fantasy RPG
game supplement
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book

Palladium Books \$20

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Wujcik

Editing: James A. Osten and Julius
Rosenstein

Illustrations: Michael Dubisch, Kent
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Wayne Breaux Jr., Ramon Perez Jr., and
Kevin Long

Cover: John Zeleznik

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Palladium Books \$20

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Monsters & Animals

Palladium Fantasy RPG
game supplement

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Palladium Books

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Design: Kevin Siembieda

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Illustrations: Dave Carson, Roger
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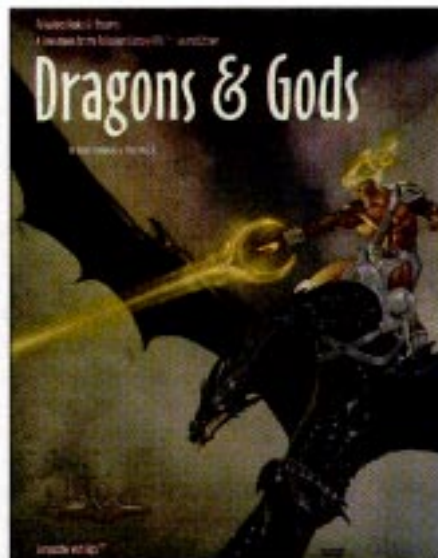
Kevin Siembieda, founder and mastermind of Palladium Books, exhales ideas like we ordinary mortals exhale carbon dioxide. With Palladium well into its second decade, Siembieda shows not a smidgen of slippage in energy or enthusiasm, doubly impressive considering that Palladium is essentially a one-man operation. Oh sure, Siembieda gets an occasional helping hand from talented guys like Erick Wujcik (inventor of the *Amber** diceless roleplaying system) and C.J. Carella (who dreamed up the creepy *Nightbane** game). But Palladium is Siembieda's baby; he conceives, writes, art directs, even lays out the bulk of the company's products. With his eye for detail, his dogged determination to get everything right, he's the kind of guy I'd want for a brain surgeon.

The Palladium Fantasy RPG, Siembieda's oldest and most durable game, illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of Siembieda's approach to roleplaying. Let's begin by acknowledging that the Second Edition (published in 1996) significantly improves on the First (from 1983), transforming a rather amateurish hodgepodge of warmed-over Tolkien into a slick, smart production, on par with the best of TSR, White Wolf, or any other high-profile publisher. That said, Palladium Fantasy is far from my first choice for a fantasy RPG, owing to convoluted mechanics like Inner Strength Points and a combat system I'm still not sure I understand, even after fiddling with it for 10 years. Graphically, the game's about as appealing as a phone directory. And Siembieda favors a plain-spoken writing style that results in clutter-free text but not much pizzazz; if, say, White Wolf is the Fox Network, Palladium is PBS.

Though the Palladium Fantasy supplements share many of the drawbacks of the parent game—stretches of flat writing, so-so graphics—they're in a league of their own, thick volumes packed with mind-bending concepts, brilliantly conceived and developed. Forget the Palladium Fantasy game; if you're a fan of any fantasy RPG, these supplements contain enough high-octane ideas to launch your campaign into the stratosphere.

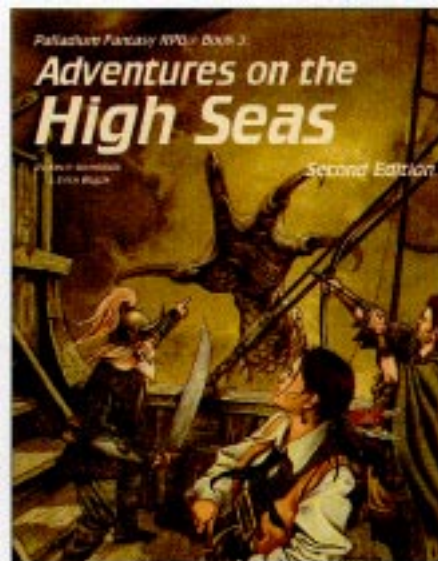
Case in point: *Old Ones*, a terrific sourcebook originally published in 1984, but updated in '96 to conform to Second Edition standards. Part history book, part slasher film, *Old Ones* catalogs 34 major cities of the Timiro Kingdom, a sprawling expanse populated by ogres, knights, and demons. The level of detail is staggering; a typical city entry pinpoints more than 100 different locations (temples, granaries, tax offices) and provides dozens of adventure hooks. It's a grim, vividly evoked world that feels alive; you can smell the sweat at the Gladiator School, taste the elderberry wine at Splash Tavern, feel a pickpocket's blade in your back at the Charm Emporium. Meanwhile, on an extraplanar realm, lurk the Old Ones, a mysterious race of near-omnipotent aliens who view humanity in much the same way as we view a bowl of Captain Crunch. Xy, "the greatest of the Evil One," heads up a decadent hierarchy that also includes the sadistic Netosa (symbol of eternal suffering) and Ya-blik (lord of pestilence and treachery). True, *Old Ones* owes a heavy debt to H. P. Lovecraft—Xy seems like a refugee from the *Call of Cthulhu** game—but it's still a dazzler.

Equally dazzling is *Dragons & Gods*, a visionary treatise on fantasy's most powerful entities. These dragons aren't your run-of-the-mill fire-breathers but mind-bending monstrosities that look like they were conceived on an LSD trip. The Lo-Dox sports golden feathers, shapechanges into a mermaid, and speaks Spanish! The Great Horned Dragon consorts with demons, practices black magic, and is a master of mathematics! The gods also receive a tradition-shattering treatment, with Siembieda combining elements of Tolkien-esque myths, Egyptian religion, and his own fertile imagination to invent a cosmology that's as compelling as it is original. We have Bes the Depraved, a hideous bearded dwarf wielding intelligent daggers (one of the daggers suffers from paranoid schizophrenia). We have



Sebek, the crocodile god, who can regrow a new arm in a week. And we have my favorite, Apis the Sacred Cow, the bovine patroness of druids and doctors. With bonus chapters on elementals and alien intelligences, *Dragons & Gods* is roleplaying nirvana.

High Seas, another winner, sounds like a piracy textbook, but the title's somewhat misleading. Sure, there's plenty of Jolly Roger material, but this is mainly a potpourri of odds and ends, ranging from rules for gladiator combat to templates for acrobat player characters to an explanation of necromantic magic. Descriptions of islands and coastal towns take up a good chunk of the book, showcasing a plethora of memorable adversaries like the Maggot Demons. The seafaring stuff—the best of its kind I've ever seen—covers the economics of sea trade, ship-to-ship combat, and naval equipment.



And lest you think Siembieda hits a home run every time at bat, here's **Monsters & Animals**, a disappointingly routine creature encyclopedia, sort of like TSR's MONSTROUS MANUAL™ book, only without the flair. Each entry includes physical characteristics, behavior notes, and a full set of stats (which Palladium fanatics will be happy to hear includes Structural Damage Capacities, Occupational Characters Classes, and Horror Factors, making them compatible with the *Rifts** game and other Palladium RPGs). Too often, however, the descriptions are lifeless, even trivial. For instance, here's the opening to the Turtles entry: "Turtles are considered to be the most conservative of all the reptiles, both in design and character. All turtles have a characteristic bony outer shell . . . Many turtles can withdraw their head and legs into their shells when threatened." I got a kick out of the fantasy monsters, especially weirdoes like the loogaroo (an intelligent vulture) and the eye killer (a dog/serpent/owl combo), but way too much space is wasted on everyday animals like chipmunks, frogs, and mules. In all my years of roleplaying, the number of times I needed stats for a chipmunk is approximately equal to the number of people who think *Batman & Robin* is the greatest film ever made.

Evaluation: Whether you're a player or a gamemaster, you'll find a wealth of ideas in these books, all of which can be adapted (with a little effort) to the system of your choice. **Dragons & Gods** should top your shopping list, followed by **Old Ones** (if you're in the market for new settings), and **High Seas**, (better for

veterans, owing to some complicated concepts). **Monsters & Animals** you can probably live without. Unless, of course, you absolutely, positively have to know the Structural Damage Capacity of a chipmunk.

Earthdawn Survival Guide

*Earthdawn** game supplement

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Throal: The Dwarf Kingdom

Earthdawn game supplement

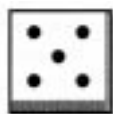
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Illustrations: Janet Aulisio, Tom Baxa, Joel Biske, Kent Burles, Liz Danforth, Jeff Laubenstein, and Larry MacDougal

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I can't say I'm all that crazy about *Earthdawn*. The system uses too many numbers for my taste, the magic rules in particular demanding too much of my teenie brain. But I adore the supplements and heartily recommend them to fantasy roleplayers of all persuasions, AD&D aficionados in particular. Don't spread this around, but the conceptual differences between the AD&D game and *Earthdawn* aren't all that dramatic. Both share many of the same archetypes (like dwarves and dragons). Both feature magic-soaked, vaguely medieval settings. And both foster epic adventures pitting noble heroes against dastardly villains and fantastic monsters. For these reasons, an *Earthdawn* sourcebook can be an idea-deficient Dungeon Master's best friend.

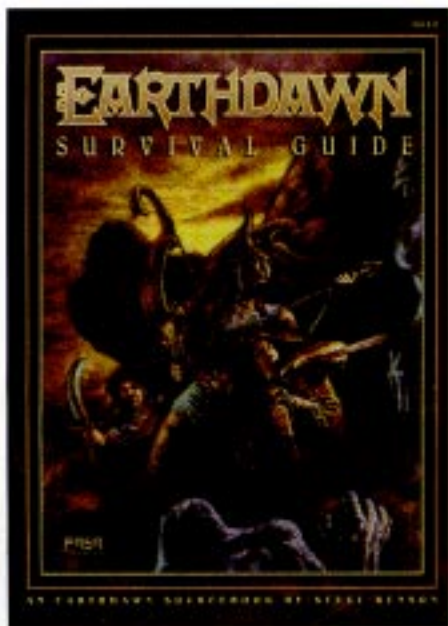
If I didn't know better, I'd swear that *Earthdawn Survival Guide* was designed to be a generic fantasy supplement, intended for everyone. First, the whimsical writing style makes it as inviting as a book of fairy tales. From the introduction: "The song of the road has called to me since my boyhood in the hinterlands of Barsaive. The confines of Caralle, the humble village where I grew up, suited

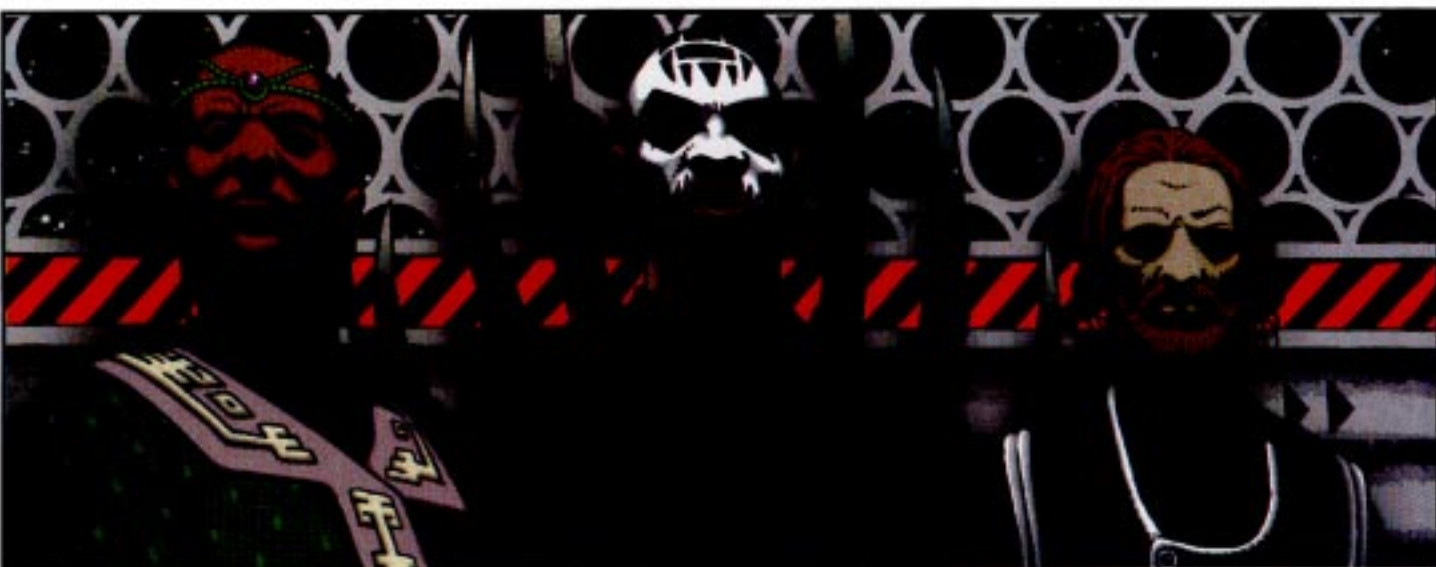
most of my neighbors just fine, but I always longed to know what lay over the next hill . . ." Kinda makes you want to curl up in a chair with a cup of hot chocolate, doesn't it? Second, all of the game material—every statistic, mechanic, and formula—is confined to the last few pages, meaning you can peruse most of the book without stumbling over a single number.

Essentially a collection of essays, the *Survival Guide* strolls from one interesting topic to another, all of them loaded with useful information for fantasy campaigns. The "Underground Exploration" section describes a nailbiting array of subterranean hazards, ranging from pockets of poisonous mist to veins of liquid fire. "The Tale of the Bone Bell," one of many parables from legendary explorer Brun Rockstriker, tells of a majestic artifact constructed by an elven elemental to keep away monsters. "On The Healing Arts," the book's most provocative chapter, delineates dozens of arcane maladies and treatments; Death's Caress causes victims to become sensitive to touch, Yellow Jig induces random fits of jerky, uncontrollable muscle spasms. Burn your finger? Soothe it with a mist blossom poultice.

But although the *Survival Guide* is a great read, it's only a so-so reference. Without an index or a comprehensive table of contents, it's difficult to locate specifics; the only way to find, say, data about explosive gas is to page through the book. Despite a chapter titled "Places of Legend and Peril," there's not a single map. And at \$18, it ain't cheap; any of the Palladium books gives you 100 additional pages for approximately the same price.

A bit more of a bargain—an extra two bucks buys you 60-plus pages — *Throal: The Dwarf Kingdom* takes a comprehensive look at a dwarven enclave that wouldn't be out of place in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. *Throal*, nestled in the midst of a mountain range, teems with political tension and social anarchy; in short, it's ideal for adventure. Robin Laws, a mainstay of the *Earthdawn* design team, describes the kingdom in vivid detail, from the type of clock favored by commoners (the hour candle) to the number of baths taken by the average citizen (four per month). How do dwarves breathe underground? Air sponges magically transmute carbon dioxide into oxygen. Why are *Throal* coins hexagonal? To make them harder to counterfeit. An excellent section on economics explains how crude underground





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farming operations evolved into sophisticated trade networks. The culture chapter takes a look at unusual sports (like hach'var, where teams compete to poke animal hide-covered spheres through holes in a stone wall) and profiles some of the kingdom's prominent artists (like Javen, who specializes in ornate pots bearing caricatures of the royal family).

Thanks to a thorough index, *Throal* makes a better reference than the *Survival Guide*. But like the *Survival Guide*, *Throal* falls short in the map department. And the campaign outline seems like an afterthought, something tacked on the end to fill up a few spare pages. Overall, though, *Throal* is a first-class setting, a history-rich empire that any dwarf would be proud to call home.

Evaluation: Page for page, these *Earthdawn* supplements aren't as idea-saturated as the Palladium books. But because of their strong narratives, the *Earthdawn* books go down easier, making them more suitable for RPG newcomers. *Earthdawn* books can be as addictive as potato chips; if this pair whets your appetite for more, I recommend *Parlath: The Forgotten City*, *Skypoint & Vivane*, *Legends of Earthdawn*, and *The Serpent River*.

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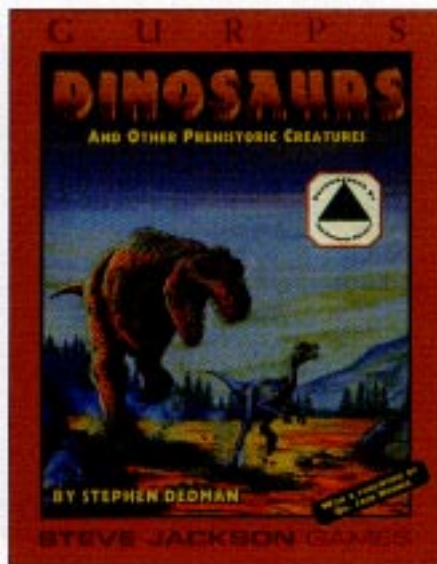
Steve Jackson Games \$18
Design: James Cambias

Editing: Sean Barrett

Illustrations: Dan Smith, Terry Tidwell, Arthur Roberg and Carol Scavella

Cover: Kelly Freas

As long as I've been running my AD&D campaign—going on ten years—I've toyed with the idea of sending my player characters to the prehistoric era and having 'em go head to head with



dinosaurs. Imagine a sword-wielding warrior going up against a stegosaurus or an elven ranger staring down a Tyrannosaurus rex. Whoopee!

Unfortunately, dinosaur sourcebooks are about as scarce as Spice Girls at a Mensa convention. I figured that, in the wake of "Jurassic Park," we'd be flooded with dino books, but there's been nary a trickle. In fact, *GURPS Dinosaurs* is the only sourcebook of its type I've seen in the past couple of years, making it the stand-out, I guess, by default.

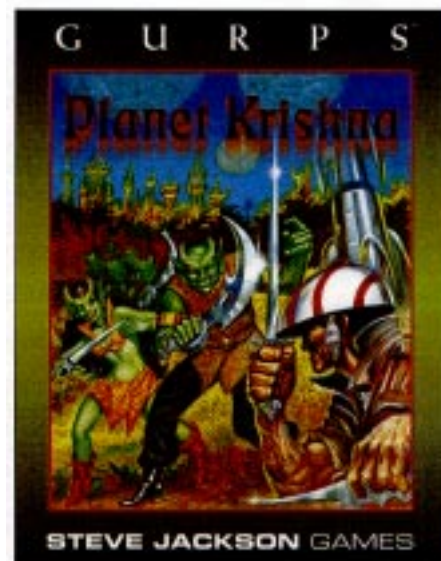
Not that it's bad. As a reality-based reference, *GURPS Dinosaurs* scores high, cataloging literally hundreds of prehistoric creatures in remarkable detail. I thought I was reasonably well-versed in dino-lore, but I'd never heard of three-fourths of these: the dragon-like scutosaurus, the frog-munching limnoscelis, the big-as-an-airplane, mean-as-a-cobra quetzalcoatlus. Each entry includes complete statistics (in GURPS-ese, translatable to other game systems by resourceful gamemasters), habitat notes, and special rules (like those for gryposaurus head-butting contests). There's also a fascinating section on prehistoric humans, replete with anthropological minutia. We learn, for instance, that the Cro-Magnon women were far better at finding food than their male counterparts, and that the language limitations of early man were due to an underdeveloped larynx.

But when it comes to putting all this together in a campaign, *GURPS Dinosaurs* pretty much leaves you on your own. There's a ton of hard data, but not much about roleplaying; that is, we're told a lot about what dinosaurs look like, but darn little about how they

behave. I wanted to breathe the air of the Triassic Era, feel the Cretaceous swamp beneath my feet, know what it's like to hunt—or be hunted by—dinosaurs. But no such luck; *GURPS Dinosaurs* has about as much personality as a biology text. The scenarios are too skimpy. There aren't nearly enough illustrations. And the book dismisses its most tantalizing premise—dinosaurs as player characters—in a handful of paragraphs. *GURPS Dinosaurs* is good as far as it goes; it just doesn't go far enough.

Ever heard of L. Sprague de Camp's "Krishna" novels, like *The Queen of Zambra* and *The Hand of Zei*? Me neither. But after being charmed to the core by *GURPS Krishna*, based on the aforementioned books, I'm inclined to check 'em out. A guided tour of the second planet of the star Tau Ceti (11.6 light years from Earth, if you're keeping track), *GURPS Krishna* is fantasy at its goofiest. This is a world where women lay eggs, the royalty sports green hair, and diners have to eat fast before their meals wriggle off the table.

The book includes pretty much everything you need to cobble together a Krishna campaign, with an emphasis on culture and daily life. Designer James Cambias, a relative newcomer who writes with assurance and clarity, explains how Krishna maintains a stable culture by outlawing all technology more sophisticated than battle axes. Violators are subjected to the Saint-Remy Treatment, where portions of the brain are zapped with electrical charges. (How would a fireball-flinging mage fare on Krishna? Good question—and a great premise for an adventure.) Other transgressions are resolved by duels; a



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person who declines a duel is marked by the Five Mutilations (it's as nasty as it sounds). After a hard day of dueling and mutilating, citizens relax by racing gliders and watching reverse strip teases, where dancing girls wind themselves up in long sheets.

There's a roster of memorable characters (Gichak, an alien entrepreneur who wears nothing but sunglasses), a list of intriguing places to explore (Nich-Nyamadze, a polar region where everyone dresses like Santa Claus), and a menagerie of bizarre creatures (the pudamef, a grumpy carnivore with the neck of a giraffe and the head of a crocodile). **GURPS Krishna** isn't for everyone—if you're a stickler for logic, you're gonna hate this—but its paradise for role-players with a sense of humor.

Evaluation: Nothing enlivens a dreary campaign like an oddball setting, and these books showcase oddballs of the first rank. Strip away the sci-fi elements, ditch the GURPS statistics, and you're left with plenty of raw material for an eye-opening campaign. (Be prepared to do some homework; neither book has anything approaching a developed adventure.) Incidentally, if you're in the market for oddballs, you might investigate the other entries in the GURPS series. Nearly every one of them contains oodles of ideas that can be readily adapted to other RPG systems. Some of my favorites, all of which I've pillaged for my AD&D campaign: *GURPS Places of Mystery*, *GURPS Aztecs*, *GURPS Alternate Earths*, and *GURPS Voodoo*.

Short and Sweet

Ghouls: Fatal Addiction, by Ronni Radner and Ethan Skemp. White Wolf Game Studio, \$15.

*The Vampire: The Masquerade** game is always interesting, but it isn't always scary, which is why aficionados of the macabre oughta welcome **Fatal Addiction** with open claws. Spotlighting ghouls, arguably *Vampire*'s most repulsive characters, **Fatal Addiction** casts players as blood-lusting servants of the undead, willing and eager to sell their grandmas to the dog food factory for an extra pint of Type A. The book covers such ghoulish idiosyncrasies as limb regeneration, blood bonding, and the consequences of overdosing on gore (the ghoul gets sick to his stomach—really sick). Obviously, this isn't for the fainthearted, and it certainly isn't for kiddies. But if you're a lover of the grotesque, you'll find this as titillating as cuddling up to a fresh corpse.

Secrets, by Brian M. Sammons. Chaosium Inc., \$9. **Minions**, by Paul Connell, Jean Lishman, Neal Sutton, Nigel Leather, and Chris Dykins. Chaosium Inc., \$11.

Like most RPGs, *Call of Cthulhu** may seem daunting to first-timers, what with all the unfamiliar rules and background to digest. Three cheers, then, for **Secrets**, a compendium of novice-level adventures that'll have newcomers feeling like veterans in the time it takes to say "Nyarlathotep." "A Love in Need" features a creepy boarding house occupied by extraterrestrial serial killers. "A Cult of One" stars a repellent villain in desperate need of a new body. Technically, the adventures take place in the 1990s, but they can be slipped into the '20s with a minimum of tweaking. If **Secrets** still seems like more than you can handle, check out **Minions**, 15 ultra-brief scenarios—most no more than a page or two—each keyed to a specific Mythos creature or phenomena, slickly staged and a breeze to run.

Quest for Power, by Stephen Ricciardi, Thomas Gobuzas, Doug Schonenberg and Steven Samuels. Infinite Imagination, \$40.

The gorgeous, meticulously crafted **Quest for Power** takes its cue from those old choose-your-own-adventure paperbacks, which present the player character with a series of simple encounters ("You find a large mirror in an old storage room") and a fixed number of options from which to choose ("Do you gaze into the mirror or leave?"). Here, the encounters and options are listed on colorful playing cards, arranged in a grid to form a stylized representation of the city of Bainetor. PCs wander around the city, battling monsters and interrogating strangers until they trigger a climactic battle at a sinister castle. It's smooth-playing and surprisingly challenging, plus it boasts a credible solitaire system. On the other hand, a game this structured lacks the improvisational elements of a traditional RPG; if I want to shatter the mirror and fashion the fragments into magical arrowheads, I can't, 'cause that ain't one of the choices on the card. As a board game, **Quest for Power** gets a thumbs up. But as a roleplaying game . . . well, put it this way: how do those paperbacks fare against an actual AD&D campaign? (Information: Infinite Imagination, 19 Skyline Terrace, Nanuet, NY 10954.)

Werewolf: The Wild West game* **Storytellers Screen**, by Phil Brucato,

Richard E. Dansky, Robert Hatch, and Len Lemke. White Wolf Game Studio, \$15. **Changeling: The Dreaming game*** **Storytellers Screen**, by Roger Gaudreau, Steve Herman, and Ian Lemke. White Wolf Game Studio, \$15.

As long as I've been writing this column (something like six—gulp—years), I've been complaining about referee screens, pointing out that anybody with a pair of scissors, a bottle of glue, and access to a photocopier can make his own for, oh, about 50 cents. Well, publishers haven't been taking the hint, because they're still grinding them out. So I give up. If you want to spend your hard-earned dough on a couple of slabs of cardboard, be my guest. As for you publishers, if you insist on making this stuff, the least you could do is follow the lead of White Wolf, who've made an admirable effort to add value to their screens by packaging them with 64-page sourcebooks. *Frontier Secrets*, included with the *Wild West* screen, is a terrific compendium of new gifts, breed variants, and adversaries. *Book of Lost Dreams*, the *Changeling* screen bonus, presents nifty new rules for cantrips and combat, along with an intense adventure titled "Capture the Flag." As for the screens, they may be loaded with tables and easy on the eye, but they're still slabs of cardboard to me.

Instant Adventures, by Timothy S. O'Brien, Peter Schweighofer, George R. Strayton, Paul Sudlow, Eric Trautmann, and Floyd Wesel. West End Games, \$15.

It takes time to save the universe. But what if you only have a couple of hours? West End comes to the rescue with this collection of bite-sized adventures for the *Star Wars** game, each playable in an afternoon. Best of the bunch: "Agent Nallok is Missing," an off-beat mystery that takes place in a booby-trapped salt mine. Add a set of 32 reference cards (bound in the back of the book), and you've got a keeper.

Princess Ryan's Star Marines, by Mark McLaughlin. Avalon Hill Game Company, \$55.

You're "Grandma" Marohn, stuck on the Planet of the Grapes, about to be incinerated by a squadron of Suicide Fappers. In the nick of time, good old "Poodle Cut" Kerske appears in her laser car and tosses you an electric chainsaw. Obviously, this isn't your ordinary sci-fi board game. One part "Star Wars," one part "Monty Python," the lunatic **Princess Ryan's Star Marines** pits the good guy

Marines against the bad guy Black Guards in a race to recover the kidnapped leader of Earth. It all plays out on an elaborate game board (including locales like Dismal Swamplands and A Hill Called Avalon) with colorful, Vegas-quality playing cards representing characters and equipment. The clever Time Clock—sort of like a bank, from which lime Pennies are withdrawn more or less at random to “pay” for actions—keeps pressure on the players; when the Clock runs out of Pennies, the game ends. Combat is exciting frequent, and unforgiving. Despite the goofy premise and simple rules, *Star Marines* requires both tactical skill and long-range planning; miscalculate how long it takes to breach the Royal Suite, and you’ll be pushing up daisies at the Interstellar Mall. Eat chain, Fappers!



Des Moines, Iowa native Rick Swan has played approximately ten billion different RPGs. Or at least it seems that way.

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growth of the late '80s and early '90s. Without the groundwork we laid then, we might not have had the later success of *Wizards* and *Magic*."

New Marvel SAGA™ RPG

TSR plans a summer publication date for a new superhero RPG based on Marvel Comics characters such as Spider-Man, the X-Men, and Captain America. Unrelated to the company's earlier MARVEL SUPER HEROES® RPG, first published in 1984, the new game will use the SAGA System rules seen in last year's DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ game.

"Existing characters will be a major focus," says line developer Mike Selinker, but "hero creation is a major component of the SAGA engine, and will be so here as well. We definitely are interested in winning the comic-book audience, so the game will be formatted in that style: smaller books, lots of art, big focus on hot artists and writers, that sort of thing. We believe that experienced RPGers will also like the game, because of the innovations inherent in the card-based SAGA System and the emphasis on dramatic action."

The design team plans to have over 300 characters in print within six months. Scenarios will also be frequent, as well as occasional gazetteers and new decks of cards.

Steve Jackson Announces GURPS* Traveller*

Steve Jackson Games (Austin, TX) is adapting the classic science-fiction RPG *Traveller* (GDW, 1977) to its *Generic Universal Roleplaying System* (GURPS, 1986). Longtime *Traveller* designer Loren Wiseman will edit the GURPS *Traveller* line and will write the first release, due in early 1998.

The GURPS *Traveller* line takes place in an alternate-history Third Imperium that differs from the *Traveller* 4 backgrounds published by Imperium Games (Lake Geneva, WI). SJG Managing Editor Scott Haring says, "In our timeline, Emperor Strephon doesn't get assassinated" (this was the breakpoint between the original *Traveller* setting and GDW's later *MegaTraveller*) "and the 'virus' that was the entire basis for *Traveller: The New Era* did not devastate the Imperium. Our timeline is a continuation of the original *Traveller*, though we'll be taking it in some interesting directions."

The GURPS Imperium timeline moves only a few years forward from classic *Traveller*. Wiseman's first GURPS *Traveller* volume will include a description of the gameworld; GURPS rules for characters, equipment and spacecraft; and conversion rules between the two systems. Haring said, "We want players to be able to convert any *Traveller* material to GURPS right off the bat, and we want *Traveller* players to be able to play in our alternate timeline." Wiseman is also devising a story arc that develops through many supplements. "We're gonna have a lot of fun with this before it's over," Haring says. The SJG license extends through 1999 with several renewal options.

GURPS *Traveller* is licensed from Sweetpea Entertainment, a Hollywood production company that acquired the rights to the game several years ago for a possible TV deal that fell through. After the game's original publisher, GDW, went out of business in 1995, Sweetpea decided to resurrect the game. Sweetpea also holds the movie rights to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.

SJG has produced many science-fictional GURPS settings. Most of them rely on the GURPS Space genre book, which in many details closely resembles classic *Traveller*. In 1994 the company published GURPS versions of White Wolfs Storyteller RPGs *Vampire**, *Werewolf**, and *Mage**, and its GURPS *CthulhuPunk* combines Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu** background with that of R. Talsorian's *Cyberpunk 2020*. (sjgames@io.com; www.sjgames.com)

Not Making This Up: Insecta* Rainforest

A press release titled "Bugging Out in the Rainforest" begins, "Welcome to the jungle, a place where giant hissing cockroaches fly and the heaviest bug in the world roams, the Hercules Beetle. These are just two of the insects found in *Rainforest*, the first expansion set for the *Insecta* game."

Insecta (1995) is a game of bug-to-bug combat where players build mutant insects out of assorted head, abdomen, and appendage cards "taken from actual insects." Each player can accumulate more parts by eating his enemies. Up to six players try to escape from a Hive ruled by enemy wasps, dragonflies, centipedes, termites, and spiders, all con-

trolled by a Hivemaster player. "Rules cover jumping, crawling flying hovering, instinct, stingers, web spinners, colony insects, glue squitters, neurotoxins, egg sacs, expendable spines, pheromones, trophallaxis [the transfer of nutritive secretions, i.e., vomit, between insects], and much more."

Designed by amateur entomologist Philip Eklund of Sierra Madre Games (Tucson, AZ) and developed by Neal Sofge and Michael Wasson of Fat Messiah Games (Los Angeles), *Rainforest* adds butch jungle thingies such as earwigs, trapjaw ants, giant Malaysian honeybees, and insuperable adversaries like carnivorous plants, bufonoid toads, geckos, hummingbirds, and spiny anteaters. New rules include stink glands, sticky tongues, bloodsucking fangs, and exploding bugs.

The expansion, with 119 cards and two pixie displays (Clack just writes what they tell us, folks), costs \$14.95. *Insecta* (1-7 players, playing time 30 minutes to five hours) is \$19.95. Shipping and handling \$3.50 for orders up to \$20; add \$1 shipping charge for each additional \$20; overseas orders add \$1. (Fat Messiah Games, Box 341136, Los Angeles, CA 90034; NealS@aol.com)

Wildstorm RPG Update

In issue #238 Clack announced that Pinnacle Entertainment Group, publisher of the *Deadlands: The Weird West** RPG, was designing a superhero RPG based on WildStorm Studios comic characters. According to Pinnacle's Shane Hensley, the deal fell through early this year, so the game won't happen.



Freelance writer and cub reporter Allen Varney will write DRAGON® Magazine's newly resurrected "TSR ProFiles" column, which takes over from "Current Clack" starting next issue.

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The Current Clack

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Garfield Patents Trading Card Games

In September the U.S. Patent Office granted *Magic: The Gathering** designer Richard Garfield a patent for the "trading card game method of play."

U.S. Letters Patent 5,662,332 describes a game of strategy and chance in which "players construct their own library of cards, preferably from trading cards, and play their library or deck of cards against the deck of cards of an opposing player. However, the game components may take other forms, such as a board game, or the game may be played in different media, such as electronic games, video games, computer games, and interactive network."

The patent claims "an exclusive property or privilege" relating to games with "a reservoir of multiple copies of a plurality of game components" that call for players to construct "their own library of a predetermined number of game components by examining and selecting game components from the reservoir of game components." The patent also covers Magic's "tap" mechanism of bringing new cards into play by turning existing cards "from an original orientation to a second orientation." The complete text is on the World Wide Web at patent.womplex.ibm.com/details?patent_number=5662332.

The patent is in Garfield's name because only individuals, not companies, can obtain patents. However, inventors can then assign the rights to companies, and Garfield (who himself was never closely involved in securing this patent) has assigned all rights to Wizards. He says, "Game mechanics are important and hard to protect. Establishing a precedent with this patent is good for the industry and good for designers."

Patents protect "any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, composition of matter, or improvement thereof,"

In recent years this has been informally expanded to encompass such abstractions as software and mathematical formulae. A patent grants the inventor the right to exclude others from making, using, or selling the invention without paying a fair licensing fee. This differs from a copyright, which protects a work of art (but, significantly, not rules mechanics) from being copied without permission; and from a trademark, which protects a name or symbol that identifies a product. So *Magic: The Gathering* and its distinctive logo are registered trademarks, whereas the *Magic* rulebook, card art, and card text are copyrighted. This new patent covers *Magic's* unique mechanics.

The Patent Office awards many game-related patents annually, mostly for token designs, spinner mechanisms, and the like. For instance, game designer and manufacturer Lou Zocchi holds a patent for his "Zocchihedron" 100-sided die. This hobby's first patent for game rules went to Al Leonardi of Nova Games, for his Ace of Aces air-combat games in book format (the same system used in the later *Lost Worlds* booklets). Most patents last 17 years.

Garfield, who holds a doctorate in combinatorial mathematics from the University of Pennsylvania, is the great-great-grandson of U.S. President James A. Garfield (1831-81). Richard isn't the first Garfield to gain a patent; his great-uncle invented the paper clip. On September 24 Richard and his wife, Lily, extended the distinguished lineage with the birth of their daughter, Terry Linnea Garfield. (custserv@wizards.com; www.wizards.com)

Pat Pulling Dies at 49

Patricia Ann Pulling, 49, founder of the organization Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons (BADD), died of cancer October 15 in Richmond, VA.

When her son, Irving Lee "Bink" Pulling II, committed suicide in 1982, Pat Pulling became convinced his RPG hobby was responsible. In her book *The Devil's Web: Who is Stalking Your Children for Satan?*, in testimony at murder trials, and on more than 200 radio talk shows, she linked RPGs with Satanic worship and the '80s epidemic of teen suicide. Along with Dr. Thomas Radecki of the National Coalition Against Television Violence, and Larry Jones, who produced a newsletter called *File 19* for Christian police officers, Pulling belonged to the key triumvirate fomenting the "Satanic panic" of the '80s.

For most of a decade, BADD controlled public perceptions of roleplaying, until designers Michael Stackpole, Loren Wiseman, and others began systematically refuting all accusations. The panic lost vigor in the late '80s when insurance companies started refusing injury claims of "ritual Satanic abuse." In 1992, Radecki surrendered his license to practice medicine, in response to charges of unprofessional conduct. Jones's current whereabouts are unknown. Pulling became a real-estate agent in Glen Allen, VA, where she was active in Republican politics. She is survived by her husband and four daughters.

"She was obviously very driven, very concerned about the welfare of children," says Stackpole. "Her methods were not quite the sort of thing I was taught in college—she did a lot of damnation-by-headline-[but] she was clearly very dedicated to her cause. I firmly believe she went to her grave 'knowing' that games killed her son."

Though Pat Pulling caused lasting damage to this hobby's image, Stackpole credits her with "forcing the industry to grow up. She shined one hell of a light on us, so we had to learn how to deal with the outside world. Without that, we might not have had the strong

Continued on page 119

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